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Havana, July 12 (JIT) - The Cuban team defeated Peru in five sets at the V U-23 Men's Volleyball Pan American Cup 2023, which started on Tuesday at the Havana Sports City Coliseum.

The Peruvians, while the home team missed several actions, put desire to their game, concentrated, knowing what it represents to win at least two sets to the favorite to defend the crown won in the previous tournament in 2018.

Then the locals reacted, totally dominated the tie-break, but the Peruvians were still happy with the setback with a slate of 25-19, 20-25, 25-12, 21-25, 15-7.

For the hosts, the unquestionable leader, opposite Alejandro Miguel Gonzalez, set the high note by accumulating 35 points, escorted by center Thiago Suarez (12) and point Bryan Camino (10).

For the South American team, the most productive players were corner players Sebastián Blanco (17) and Leonel Despaigne (16).

Despite the 30 errors of the Cubans (compared to only 17 by their opponents), they achieved substantial advantages in attack (53-42), blocking (13-7) and service (16-4).

Jesús Cruz, coach of Cuba, acknowledged that "the first match is always difficult for us, but we never thought that it would get complicated and extend to five sets. We found a very combative Peruvian team, who came out to fight for the victory, and because of our game we also gave them possibilities".

Setter Adrian Chirino, Cuban captain, pointed out that "we started making many mistakes and Peru, who is a tough team, came out to play us with a good claw and they knew how to defend, attack and serve".

"They really took advantage of our bad moment that gave us the chance to win those two sets, but we were able to recover and in the end we won in the tie-break".

The visiting captain, Hiroshi La Torre, also a passer, said that we know the opponent we were facing, Cuba is very strong, they block well and attack very powerful, but we are very happy with today's result, I think we played a very good match against the local team. This has just begun and we hope to keep on adding up.

Cuban Juan Carlos Gala, Peru's coach, said that "we helped my players to come here to prepare, to face other opponents. I know the Cuban team, which is a decisive, one-ball team, and when you play them two or three, they start to have difficulties".

"My boys behaved well, they went above expectations, winning two sets against Cuba I imagine it is a reason to celebrate in Peru", he considered.

"We know the quality of the Cuban team, we respect and love Cuba, but our professional work is always serious, I am happy with the victory in these two sets and I hope my team will keep the same spirit in the rest of the matches," he said.

Chile's victory over Nicaragua in four sets kicked off this tournament that will grant two tickets to the Norceca teams for the Junior Pan American Games of 2025.

The match, very even most of the time, ended with scores of 23-25, 25-21, 25-17 and 26-24 in almost two hours of action.

This Wednesday, as Mexico finally could not make the trip, Peru will not have a match. At 12:00 noon, Cuba-Nicaragua and then Dominican Republic-Chile will face each other.

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