

Father and son make history for Cuban athletics in outdoor world championships



Havana, August 22 (RHC) - The Nápoles family has made history in Budapest-2023. Never before in Cuban athletics has a father guided the destiny of a son in an outdoor world championship until Juan Gualberto Nápoles was at the helm of Cristian Nápoles in the Hungarian capital.

And the family's happiness could not be greater. Hand in hand with his father, Cristian won an unprecedented bronze medal in the triple jump, in an event in which Cuba made its history even bigger by winning two medals in addition to the silver medal won by Lázaro Martínez.

"It was not difficult for me (to train my son), I have been used to this pressure. My chamaco (son) was always with me in the youth world championships," a beaming Nápoles Sr. told Radio Habana Cuba (www.radiohc.cu) via WhatsApp from Budapest.

The coach showed nostalgia for the triumphant years in the youth categories, when under his command his heir was crowned champion in the U-18 World Cup in Cali-2015 and was runner-up in the U-20 World Cup in Bydgoszcz-2016.

They then embarked on different paths, although always affiliated to the Cuban Athletics Federation (FCA) and never stopped sharing experiences.

"I lost a little bit the rhythm of the race ((in the first jumps) and my coach, who is my dad, realized it and 'I was able to make some adjustments," Cristian (24 years old) said in statements to www.jit.cu, making clear how indispensable his father's support is.

In the hard times of the pandemic (2021), when the competitions and trips abroad for Cuban athletics almost disappeared, both decided to separate from the national team, although they left the door open for a return.

For these and other reasons, today the celebration is incalculable. Some speak of the comeback of the year in Cuban athletics.

"We arrived at the World Cup well prepared. Proof of this is that he improved his personal best, setting it at 17.40", added proudly the professor, who in social networks thanked countless people who always trusted them and opened the doors of the Cuban team again.

Napoli Sr. made it clear that in training he is strict and there are no privileges with his son.

"In the old days when he worked with the group - he included long jumpers Juan Miguel Echevarría and Maykel Massó - Cristian was just one more. There was no specialized attention (with him), he had to do everything like the others," he recalled.

He considered that "power" is the greatest quality of his offspring in the jumping box and pointed out that he is "very competitive".

Before the World Championship, Cristian had achieved five victories in the season in competitions in America and Europe, including the one on May 6 in Havana, where he was only four centimeters away from his personal best (17.38), which he now improved by two centimeters.

In addition to achieving his lifetime best, in Budapest he lived up to the saying that third time's the charm. Never before had the young man from Havana been able to stand on the podium in an outdoor adult world championship, after having been close to the medals in London-2017 (fourth) and in Doha-2019 (fifth). And nothing better than to do it with his family.

Several stars of world athletics have triumphed by the hand of their parents, among them the king of the pole vault Armand Duplantis and the president of World Athletics Sebastian Coe himself, but this is the first time that this has happened in Cuban athletics, at least in open air world championships.

The books record a similar precedent, coincidentally also in the triple jump, when David Giralt Sr. led his son, Arnie David, to bronze in another world championship, although in that case indoors in Doha 2010.

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