

Volleyball: Lopez sees improvement and high spirits in Cuban team for Rio Pre-Olympics



Miguel Angel Lopez

Havana, September 27 (RHC).- Star Miguel Angel Lopez affirmed that the Cuban volleyball team will arrive at the Rio de Janeiro Pre-Olympic better than in previous events, very encouraged and mentalized to reach an Olympic ticket to Paris-2024.

"It only remains for each one to give 200 percent when it comes to playing to get the victories we need to be able to qualify (to Paris-2024). The team is totally ready," said the point-receiver of Brazil's Sada Cruzeiro in statements to Radio Habana Cuba (www.radiohc.cu).

Nicknamed "the flying Cuban" because of his great jumping power, Lopez stressed that "the team is different, both mentally and emotionally. The change of coaching staff has been very good for us, as we had lost a bit of harmony," he reflected shortly before flying to Rio on Wednesday.

"At times we looked a bit lost in the game. We recovered that in this last month of preparation," warned the Cienfuegos native, although he warned that in the physical part all players have not been able to reach 100 percent.

"But there is no time left. What we have left is to iron out what we need to do, to get the technical-tactical part right, and to face our rivals" in the most important tournament of the year, scheduled from September 30 to October 8.

He considered that of the three groups formed by the International Federation (FIVB), Rio is the "most difficult and competitive", however he was optimistic and recalled that his generation owes the fans an Olympic qualification, since the team was unable to qualify for Tokyo-2020.

He revealed that after returning from the continental Norceca recently played in the United States, they focused on "improving the mistakes and weak points" they had in that tournament, as well as "having more patience when deciding a set or a decisive point".

He considered that passing, the least solid position in the national team, has improved and was confident that they will have a good performance in Rio.

"It is true that at times (the passers) make decisions that are not the right ones, but in these last few weeks they have prepared well with the support of Liam Sem Estrada, a former national team coach," he said and said that in addition to "improving their technical development, they must gain more confidence."

"I think it is a matter of self-confidence and of all of us internalizing what we have and with them we have to go out and win all the games we have to win to qualify," he remarked.

The top two teams in the group will qualify for Paris-2024.

During seven years playing at the highest level, López has won several titles with Cuba and with clubs in Argentina and Brazil, as well as around two dozen individual awards, including the Most Valuable Player (MVP) at the 2021 Club World Championship, where he led Sada Cruzeiro to the title.



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