

Cuban volleyball team will concentrate on April 15 in preparation for the VNL



Havana, April 5 (RHC) - The Cuban men's volleyball team will concentrate on April 15 in Havana with an eye on the National League (VNL), the last chance to qualify for the Paris-2024 Olympic Games.

Jesús Cruz, DT of the squad, advanced the information to Radio Habana Cuba (www.radiohc.cu) and confirmed that one player has already arrived on the island from Europe after playing the season in his club, the center Javier Concepción (Poitiers of France).

"On the 15th Concepción and passer Christian Thondike, both starters in the last Pre-Olympic, should start training, and by the end of April other players will be joining the team as soon as they arrive in Havana," the coach said.

He assured that the team's base for the VNL will be the same that attended the Pre-Olympic Games at the end of last year in Rio de Janeiro, where Cuba came third in its key and was one step away from qualifying for Paris.

They are going to be joined by figures like Robertlandy Simón (Piacenza) and Michael "El Ruso" Sánchez (Itambé Minas), two volleyball players we will be able to count on as soon as they finish the season in their clubs.

He regretted the ankle injury suffered a few days ago by Miguel David Gutiérrez and the knee discomfort of Jesús Herrera, two of the opposites of the squad, although he was hopeful that they will be able to recover for the first phase of the VNL.

The first week "is key" for Cuba, considered the coach, explaining that right now "we are out of the qualifying zone and we cannot afford to start with a weak week".

"We have to try to get victories and points to move up in the ranking in that started," Cruz said when referring to the opening week, in which Cuba will play in Rio de Janeiro against Japan, Germany, Brazil and Iran from May 21 to 26.

He described as "very positive" the evolution of several Cuban players inserted in foreign leagues, although he regretted that some, especially those who play in Italy, have not had the desired participation and have had to share the starting lineup with players who also have "very high level".

"The growth they have had is undeniable and what we all hope is that they put it now in function of the national team when they play together in the VNL," added Cruz, who took over as DT of the national team in August 2023.

The 14 players who will travel to the matches with Argentina will be the same that will be in the first week of the VNL.

For the final integration of the squad, the coaching staff will take into account the performance at the end of the season and during the preparation on the island, because "our start in the VNL has to be good".

Cuba is currently in eleventh place in the world ranking (236.96 points) and is obliged to have a superlative performance in the VNL to achieve a place in Paris.

So far, seven of the 12 teams that will be in the Olympic Games already have their tickets in their pockets and the main contenders for the remaining five tickets are Italy (third in the ranking), Argentina (sixth), Slovenia (seventh), Serbia (ninth), Cuba (eleventh), the Netherlands (13th), Turkey (14th) and Iran (15th).



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