

*Javier Sotomayor talks with  
children at the Fine Arts  
Museum.*

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By Orlando González Cruz

Havana, April 14 (RHC) --The world record holder in high jump, Javier Sotomayor, shared today with children and young participants in the Art and Sports workshop that takes place every Saturday at the Museum of Fine Arts in Havana and that will end on May 18th,

It was a beautiful moment that was lived in the cultural facility, where children and their families were able to ask questions to the Olympic champion and double holder of the planet, who has held for more than thirty years the world outdoor and indoor primacy in his specialty.

In addition to the enormous talent that led him to win four gold medals in indoor world competitions and three Pan American titles, Sotomayor is accompanied by a humility and Cubanness as high as our palms, or more in tune with the occasion, as high as the mark of two meters and 45 centimeters established in Salamanca, Spain, on July 27, 1993, which left him inscribed in the history books as the man who has risen the highest from the ground with the sole impulse of his legs.

The native of Limonar in the western Cuban province of Matanzas, delighted those present with his anecdotes as an active athlete, and he was visibly moved by the questions and displays of affection from those present.

After the exchange, Sotomayor kindly offered statements to Radio Habana Cuba (RHC).

It is a real pride to be able to have our world record holder and Olympic champion Javier Sotomayor on the RHC microphones. Tell us what did you think of this experience with the children?

Very nice. The questions they asked me, the time to take pictures with each one of them, are memories that maybe they will keep in their memory for a long time, and that's how I take it with me. Maybe in five or six years I won't recognize them all, but I will remember this moment.... When I was a kid I had the opportunity to see a few famous athletes and artists. Those were more difficult times to take pictures, we didn't have the means for that, but in my mind is the first time I saw Alberto (Juantorena), the first time I saw Teófilo Stevenson, Silvio Rodríguez, Pablo Milanés....

I would like to know what the people of Cuba, and specifically the people of Limonar, mean in Sotomayor's heart.

The people of Cuba are the ones to whom I have always been indebted, to whom I have always dedicated each of my triumphs. They were the ones who really motivated me to do well, and at the time when I was not as well prepared as possible they pulled me through.... And the town of Limonar was where I took my first steps, where I began to forge my sports career, where I keep so many memories of my childhood, which I think was very nice, where I had good teachers, my first coach, my friends, my brothers?

What did Javier Sotomayor feel at the moment when he made that record, when he was falling and noticed that the ribbon was intact?

Before that moment there were days in which I was, not convinced, but with a great certainty that I was going to achieve the world record that season. I felt good, the same training sessions were proving it, and not only physically, but also mentally, I was very well prepared for that occasion. Already at the time of the competition I think I did it in the same sequence of jump and height with which I had been projecting my performance. I did that competition in post, I jumped from 2.29m to 2.38m, then to 2.45m, to try to avoid fatigue and consume as many jumps as possible. When on the second attempt of 2.45m I felt that I brushed the rod, because of the same experience I had and the way I touched it, I knew that the bar was

not going to fall. As soon as I fell I felt that joy, I felt euphoric to have made one more record for my sports career.

That record is long-lived, by the way, which shows how extraordinary its value is. I would like to know your opinion about the future of the Cuban high jump and that of your son, who is also a high jumper.

Today, coincidentally, my son is jumping, and he sent me a photo from the Salamanca stadium, next to a tray where my two records appear. His club asked him to jump in the off-season, it had been more than a month since his 2.01m jump.

The future of the high jump in Cuba is not the best. Now we have Zayas, a jumper who is among the world elite, but the latter is very far from being able to represent us in the Olympic or World Games. Maybe in a Central American Games, maybe, and it is pitiful in the sense that a jumper may not appear for many years. At world level, great athletes have been close to the world record, especially Barshim and Bondarenko, Tamberi, the Italian who has not been so close to the world record, but he has been a very consistent competitor.

What do you think about the awards that World Athletics is going to give to the Olympic champions of Paris 2024?

I believe that every athlete should be recognized for what he/she does, especially because they are the ones who make those profits, and that the federations get the money as a product of their performances and results... I think it is a great initiative of World Athletics, to give them back.

A message to the Cuban people.

Strength to all, keep fighting, do each one of us the best we can do so that we can be better and better.

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