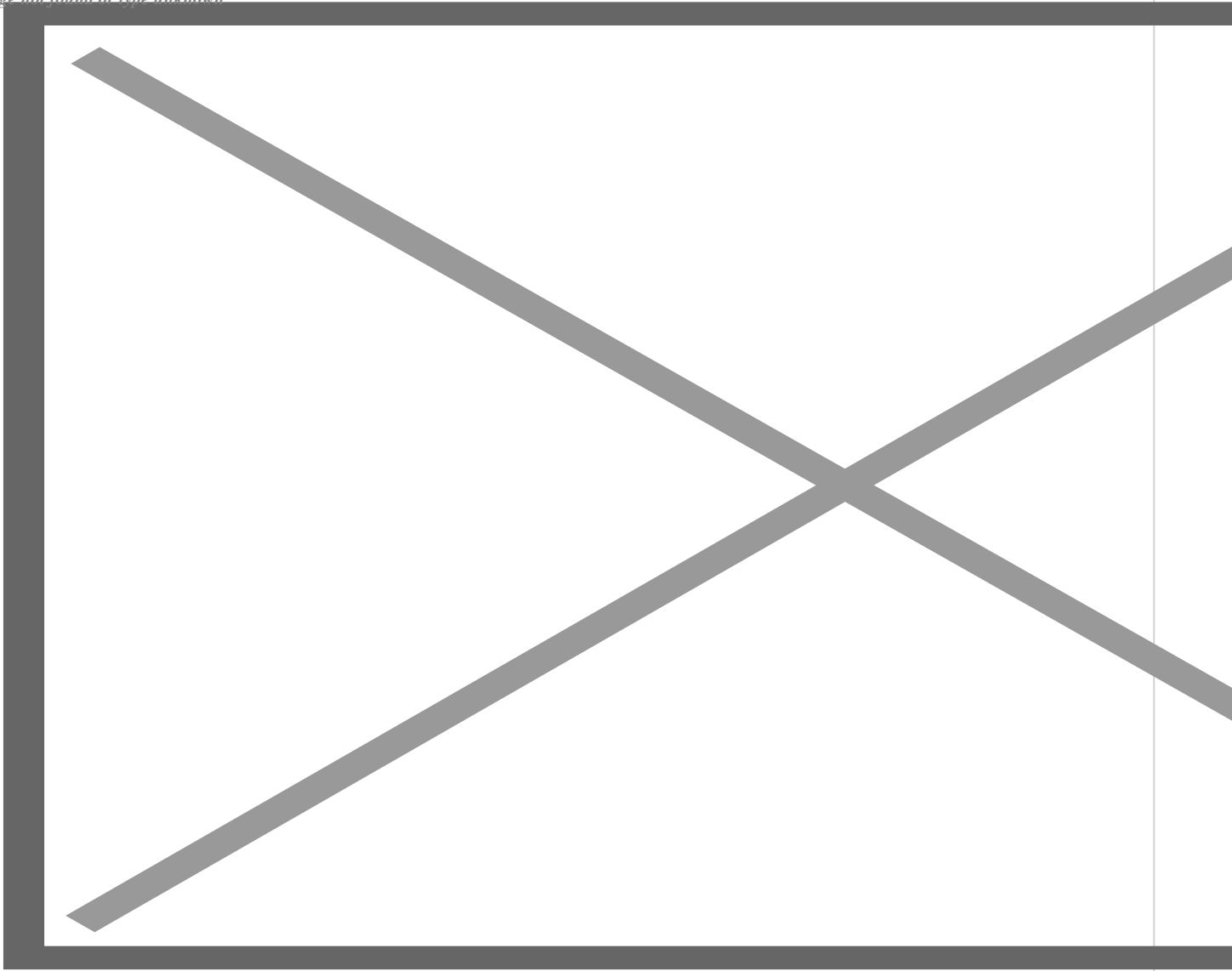


Cuba vs Japan for their third straight win in the VNL

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Robertlandy Simón

Havana, May 24 (ACN)-- The Cuban men's volleyball team faces Japan this Friday in search of its third consecutive victory in the first week of the Nations League of that sport, based in Rio de Janeiro.

After beating Brazil and Germany in their first two outings, in both cases 3-1, the Cubans climbed to ninth place in the world ranking, the last place that gives them a ticket to the French capital.

The Cubans entered the Olympic zone after beating the Germans in a dramatic match, a result that was combined with the Serbians' 0-3 defeat against the Japanese.

Now the Cubans are in the ninth place of the RM with 256.85 points, ahead of Serbia (252.85).

Against the Germans, whom Cuba had not beaten in 14 years, Jesús Cruz's students were far superior in blocking (13-6) and serving (6-3).

In the individual order, they were once again led by Marlon Yant with 21 points, who celebrated his 23rd birthday in style, and Miguel Ángel López (18).

Javier Concepción also stood out, with 13 points, 5 of them in blocking to consolidate himself as one of the best in that department in the competition, the star Robertlandy Simón (9, with two blocks), and the substitutes José Massó (8 points) and Osniel Mergarejo (2).

These last two were DT Cruz's secret card in the fourth quarter, and with his powerful services they turned the score around and sealed the Cuban victory.

On Saturday the Cubans will face Iran, at the end of the first week, and in the second week of the League, in Ottawa, Canada, they will clash with the host team, Italy, world champion, France and the Netherlands.

In the third and last of the qualifying round, in Ljubliana, Slovenia, they will face the local team, Bulgaria, Serbia and Poland.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic champion, France, as host, Germany, Brazil, Japan, the United States, Poland and Canada, have already secured their places.

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