

# *Cuban soccer team faces St. Kitts and Nevis in its last chance to reach the Gold Cup*

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Havana, Nov 11 (GR) - The Cuban national soccer team will play in the next few days the playoff round against Saint Kitts and Nevis, with the aim of accessing the 2025 Gold Cup. It is a playoff in which the Cuban team is the favorite to secure one of the last tickets to the top tournament organized by CONCACAF.

The call-up of 23 players has several new features in relation to the previous call-up, made in October against Trinidad and Tobago. After a long absence, experienced players Yosel Piedra and Luis Javier Paradela return to the team, who should start against their rivals on November 14, when the first leg of the away game will be played. Four dates later, both teams will meet at the Antonio Maceo stadium in the city of Santiago de Cuba.

Among the most notable absences are those of defender Carlos Vázquez and midfielders William Pozo and Dairon Reyes, who are suffering from different types of injuries, according to national coach Yunielys Castillo. The coaching staff has still not called up players who can contribute with their leadership and efficiency, such as left back Jorge Luis Corrales and defender Modesto Méndez.

The rest of the roster had no major changes and players who are already regulars among the Leones de Caribe, and who form the backbone of the team, were taken into account.

Goalkeeper Raiko Arozarena, defender Orlando Calvo, midfielders Karel Espino, Yasnier Matos, and Yunior Pérez, forwards Onel Hernández and captain Maykel Reyes should play a key role in the game.

Once again, Castillo decided to give opportunities to several boys who are part of the U-20 national team. Defender Elvis Casanova, midfielder Rey Angel Rodriguez, and striker Anier Casanova intend to show their good soccer qualities if they get playing time on the field.

Defender Leandro Mena, midfielders Pedro Bravo and Michael Camejo, and striker Reidel Sánchez are the most striking inclusions, as they are players who are coming for the first time, or because they have not had enough minutes in the senior team.

The rest of the squad is completed with goalkeepers Ismel Morgado and Yurdi Hodelín. In the defensive scheme, the fullbacks Karel Pérez, Alejandro Delgado, and Daríel Morejón have been added. Romario Torres and Diego Catusus have been added to the midfield.

Only Mena (Santiago de Cuba) and Camejo (Havana) play in the National Championship. The rest of the players play in clubs in Europe (4), the United States (1), and Central America (16).

Source: Yosel E. Martínez Castellanos/ Granma

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