

Cuban Judokas Looking to Colombia



Havana, October 18 (RHC-Granma)-- Cuba's men's and women's judo teams will compete in the Barranquilla 2018 Central American and Caribbean Games qualifying tournament, taking place in the Dominican Republic's Juan Pablo Duarte Olympic Stadium, October 28 and 29.

Granma International spoke with head coach of the women's team, Félix Portuondo, about prospects for his judokas looking toward the upcoming competition.

"Our aim is for the whole team to qualify for next year's regional competition," stated Portuondo, highlighting that Mexico will be the Cuban squad's main rival going into the qualifying tournament.

"Yanisleidys Ponciano from Havana will be competing in the 44kg division, a tough athlete with a strong chance of making it to the final. World Championship medal winner Melissa Hurtado will represent Cuba in the 48kg. Her main rival will be Pan American Games silver medalist Edna Carrillo of Mexico. We observed Hurtado during training sessions in Budapest prior to the World Championships, and Melissa

looked a lot stronger there."

Regarding Yurisleidis Hernández (52kg), Portuondo noted that her main opponent in the competition will be another Mexican judoka, Luz Olvera, winner of the Grand Prix in Cancun and a silver medalist at the Pan-Am Championships. Despite this, the head coach noted that Hernández is a well-disciplined athlete, who shows great focus in training and thus has a good chance of winning.

Another judoka that competed in Budapest, and will do so again in the qualifying tournament, is Anailys Dorvigni (57kg), selected after winning a round of knock-out bouts against teammates Aliuska Ojeda and junior fighters Isis Leyanis Hechevarría, Arnae Odelín, and Delkis Hernández.

However, winning gold in the qualifier won't be easy for Dorvigni, who is set to face world number four Miryam Roper of Germany.

“Maylin del Toro is competing in the 63kg, and it shouldn’t be too difficult for her to win gold, unlike Olga Masferrer from Holugin, who will face stiff competition in the 70kg. This is the hardest weight group to predict, and will feature Colombia’s Yuri Alvear - bronze medal winner in Budapest and ranked second in the world; Elvismar Rodríguez of Venezuela, number three in the global ranking; and María Pérez of Puerto Rico, current World silver medalist.

Olga was unable to compete in Hungary because of health issues, while Onix Cortéz, who has dominated this division for several years is currently recovering from surgery.

“Kaliema Antomarchi is an indisputable favorite to win gold in the 78kg, while Eliani Aguilar (78+kg) shouldn't have any problem winning her ticket to Barranquilla,” he said.

Portuondo also commented on prospects for the three judokas set to compete in the World Youth Championships taking place October 18 and 22 in Croatia.

There, Naomi Acosta, a promising young athlete who is expected to become one of the main figures in this division, will represent the island in the 52kg, alongside Isis Leyanis Hechavarría, in the 57kg, and Yusmary Reyes, in the 63kg, the latter with a strong chance of winning a medal.

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