

Alex Quiñonez was an exceptional athlete loved by all

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People of Esmeraldas bid farewell to Alex Quiñonez.

Havana, October 25 (RHC)-- Ecuador's Alex Quiñonez, bronze medalist at the 2019 World Athletics Championships and shot dead in Guayaquil on October 22, was an exceptional athlete and left a profound legacy for South American sports.

"He was an exceptional athlete for our continent, especially for the Latin American region. He matured as a person under my guidance and that of his physiotherapist Caridad Martinez. We treated him like a son. He showed that Ecuador can also shine in sprints, beyond walking," said his coach Nelson Gutierrez, who guided him in the second half of his career since March 2017.

After reaching the Olympic final at London 2012, Quiñonez stepped away from the sport, barely competing in 2014 and 2016. "He reflected on his life and realized that one of his strengths is running. When we started working together, I told him that discipline would be more important than his talent. He felt humbled," Gutierrez said in an interview with colleague Javier Clavelo.

Under Gutierrez and Martinez's guidance, success soon followed, winning the Bolivarian Games in 2017, the South American Games in 2018, the Pan American Games in 2019, culminating with bronze at the World Championships.

He was under 20 seconds four times, including a South American record of 19.87 seconds in 2019. Two of his under-20 marks came at the age of 30.

"One of his greatest merits was coming back to the sport at 27. He peaked at age 27-30. He was very consistent for three seasons when he enjoyed a lot of success before the pandemic. He was loved by all his teammates and coached like a world class athlete. He proved that athletes from our region can still perform well past the age of 25," explained Gutierrez.

He recalls how open he was to welcoming new athletes. "He became a role model for 2019 world silver medalist and Olympic bronze medalist Anthony Zambrano (400m).

"Alex ran two Diamond League finals. He joined Noah Lyles as a teammate on the Americas team."

Off the track, "he was a great cook. His teammates liked to visit him on Sundays. He loved to cook encocado, a typical dish with coconut sauce, from his hometown of Esmeralda while listening to music." He would cook it during training camps at home, in Europe or the United States.

One of his training partners and closest friends, 2015 Pan American Games silver medalist Angela Tenorio, was instrumental in convincing him to return to the sport. Fly high, brother. I will always keep you in my heart. I love you, Ñaño," Tenorio reacted on Instagram.

The Ecuadorian Athletics Federation, the Ecuadorian Olympic Committee and the 2020 Olympic Road Cycling Road Race 2020 champion Richard Carapaz also expressed their deepest condolences for his passing.

He was scheduled to begin training this week to prepare for the 2022 season. He is survived by two daughters, ages 2 and 7.

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