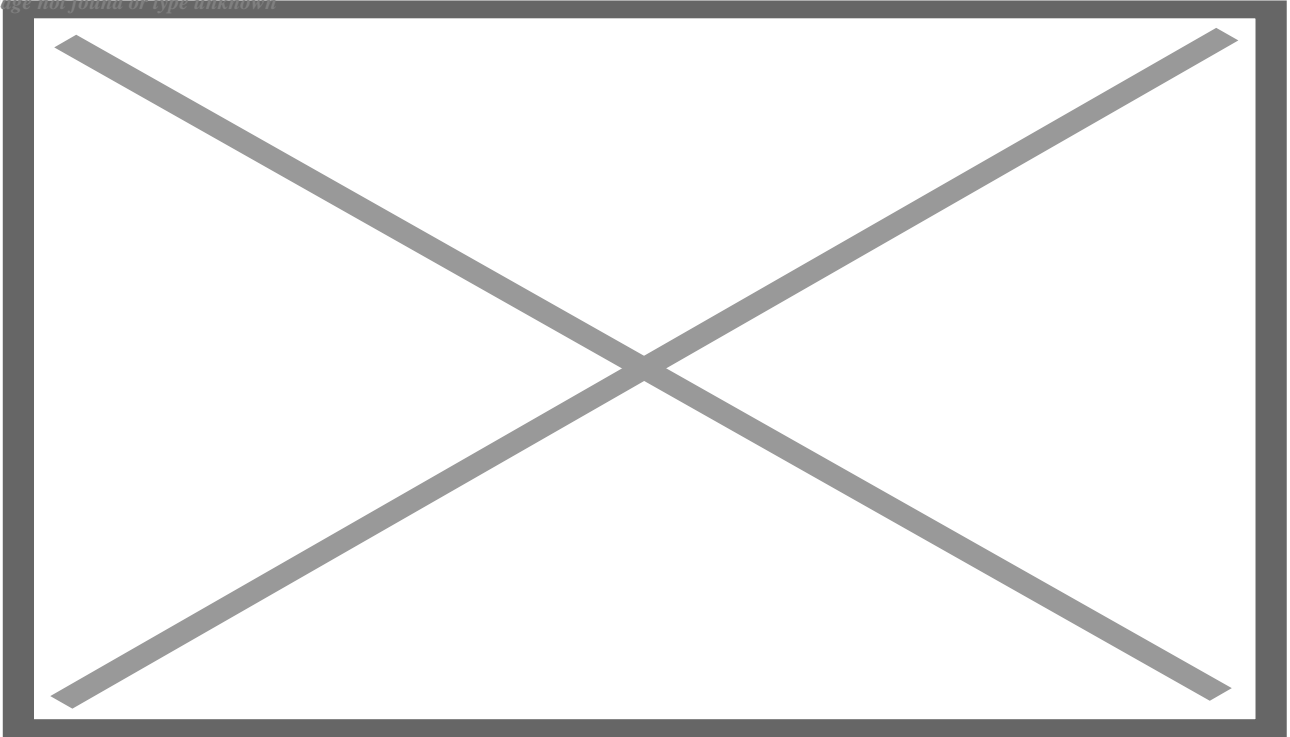


Cuba prepares its stars in search of the NORCECA volleyball title

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Marlon and Mergarejo

Havana, May 25 (RHC) - With the only exception of star player Robertlandy Simón, Cuba has called up all its star players from European and American leagues for the NORCECA men's volleyball tournament in June in Pinar del Rio.

The good news was confirmed to Radio Havana Cuba by the DT of the island's sextet, Nicolas Vives, who made it clear that the goal is to win the title and reach the only ticket in dispute for the qualifier to next year's Nations League.

"The aspiration is to win the tournament, which gives a single quota to be the World Challenger next year. There is no other option," said Vives and considered Puerto Rico as the toughest rival of the quartet that will animate the fight, from June 3 to 5, without underestimating the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

"All our players who play in foreign leagues should be there: Marlon Yant, Miguel Angel López, Osniel Mergarejo, Julio César Cárdenas, Roamy Alonso..... Michael Sanchez is also incorporated. The only

exception is Simon", added the strategist.

Some young players with prospects will also join the group since the tournament allows a roster of 14 players, clarified Vives.

He stressed that the first goal of the team is to be back in the Nationals League next year.

"The World Challenger in South Korea will be extremely tough, but we will go with the desire to qualify. Then we have the World Championships in Poland, another tough tournament, where our goal is to place well. I think that from here to there the team will be in better conditions", he said.

Although he has not yet defined the starting line-up for NORCECA, Vives said that several players could alternate and in that sense he mentioned that they are trying out Adrian Goide, Taboada and Livan Thondike as passers, while Michael Sanchez "the Russian", Miguel David Gutierrez and Jesus Herrera are competing for the starting line-up as opposites.

"We have been training as a group for just two days, although some players have been training for a week and others for two. This Monday Osniel Mergarejo, Michael, Roamy Alonso started, and Liván Osoria, Miguel Angel López, Javier Concepción, Miguel David and José Miguel Gutiérrez should be incorporated from one moment to another, and Marlon should do so next week".

Regarding Simón, who has other commitments, he clarified that although he will not be there now, he will be incorporated for the next competitions, because he is a figure that "is much needed by the team".

According to Vives, the training sessions have emphasized "the attack and the service, and the technical aspects. We are also working on the physical and little by little we will be introducing game situations."

"All the players have evolved very well, because many have excelled in different leagues. In the training sessions we can see above all an improvement in reception," he revealed.

"We are training with a lot of desire, making a great effort and giving our best," Vives pointed out, although he regretted that the training conditions at the National Volleyball School at the moment are not top level.

He was very happy with the achievements of Cuban players at the world level and said that the performance they have had in level leagues he hopes will translate into a good performance in the national team.

Since the 2019 NORCECA, played at the Havana Sports City, the Cuban volleyball national team has not played on the island.

Its last appearance in the international context occurred last year, when in the middle of the pandemic and with a team without much preparation time it took fourth place in NORCECA.

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