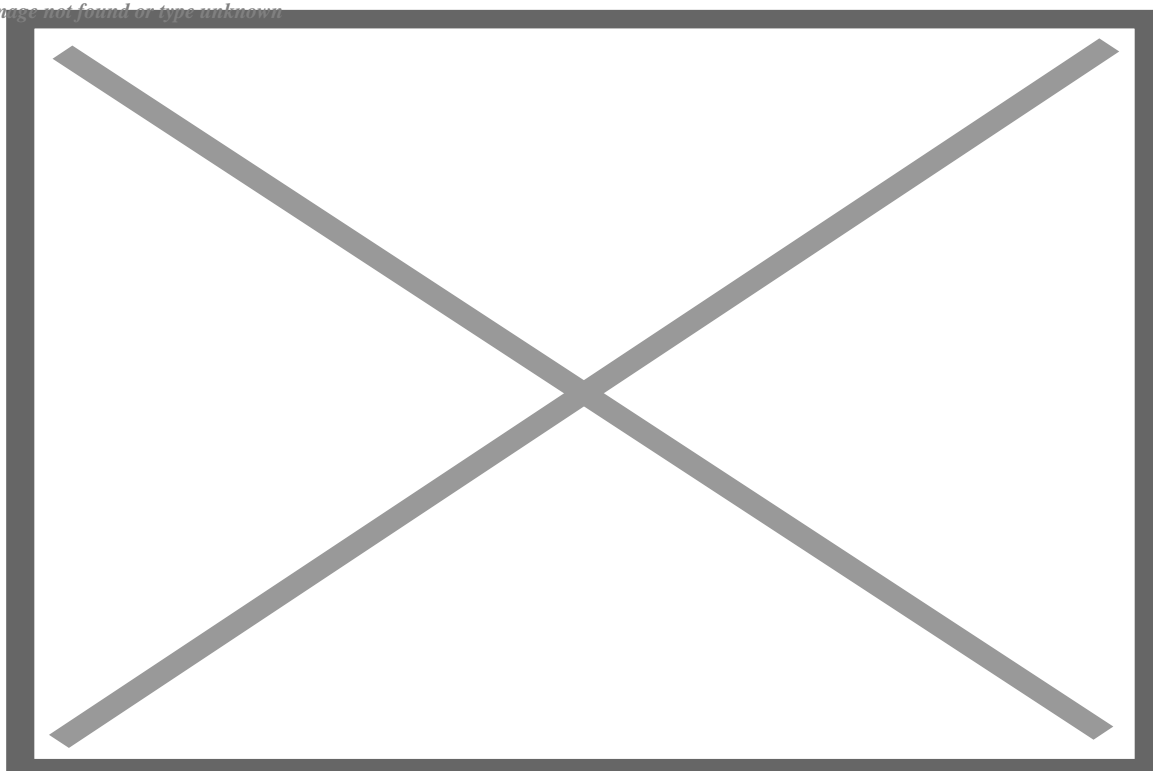


# *Cuban athletics to first training session at competition venue*

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Budapest, August 16 (JIT) - All the members of the Cuban national team for the World Championships in Budapest held their first training session on Wednesday at the New National Athletics Center, venue of the competition from August 19 to 27.

Shortly after settling in the Danube Arena Hotel in the Hungarian capital, the athletes in the company of their trainers and federation officials toured on Tuesday the training and competition areas and this Wednesday they will "start the engines".

"The conditions are excellent both in the Hotel and in the Stadium. We are approximately 20 minutes or half an hour away by bus, but everything is flowing normally and the schedules are being met," Ricardo Molina, one of the group's coaches, told Radio Habana Cuba from Budapest.

"In the training facility all the comforts are created, the giant tents are for the first time marked by countries and there are separate areas especially for throws and jumps," Molina added.

The Cuban team was completed on Tuesday night at the Danube Arena Hotel in Budapest, with the arrival of the athletes who travelled from Havana.

Another part of the team had arrived earlier from the Spanish city of Guadalajara, where they had been preparing for a little more than a week.

The list of competitors closed with 20 figures, after the hammer thrower Yasmani Fernandez left the delegation during a stopover in Paris.

Upon their arrival on Hungarian soil, the athletes from the island encountered temperatures of about 30 degrees Celsius.

The Cuban premiere, set for Saturday, will be in charge of 20-year-old debutant Ronald Mencías in the hammer classification. Mencías has a personal best of 76.66 meters, achieved in June at the Pan American Stadium in Havana.

During Saturday's afternoon segment, also in the qualifying round, the discus thrower Mario Diaz, another newcomer in these competitions, will have to be followed.

Mario arrives at the competition with the endorsement of having reigned in the regional competition in El Salvador. He exhibits as a ceiling a shot of 65.21 meters in 2022 and in the present campaign he has a maximum of 63.90 meters.

Triple jumpers Lázaro Martínez and Cristian Nápoles will "serve" the main course of the day for the followers of athletics in Cuba. Both will go to the stadium with the goal of being among the 12 candidates for the medals that will be handed out on the night of Monday, August 21.

Lázaro, world indoor champion in 2022 and Central Caribbean champion in San Salvador 2023, has a season's best jump of 17.51 meters, which places him fourth in the annual ranking.

Cristian, fourth in the world in London 2017 and fifth in Doha 2019, arrives full of aspirations in a campaign with a ceiling of 17.34 meters.

Reaching the podium will be complicated by the quality of the rivals, among them the Cuban defending champion and favorite Pedro Pablo Pichardo, who represents the Portuguese federation.

Jamaica's Jaydon Hibbert (17.87 meters), world record holder in the U-20 category, and Hugues Fabrice Zango, from Burkina Faso (17.81), also emerge as strong candidates for the crown.

The opening ceremony of the World Championships was set for Saturday afternoon at the stadium of the new National Athletics Center, recently built on the banks of the Danube and which the hosts intend to turn into a venue for major competitions of the King Sport in Europe.

Official figures will be rectified in a few hours, but some 2,100 athletes from 202 nations are expected to participate. Unfortunately, the American universal king of the 400m hurdles, Michael Norman, who announced his retirement due to an injury, will not be among the participants.

There are already several absences of winners in Oregon 2022, including the American Sydney McLaughlin (400m hurdles) and the Belgian Nafi Thiam (heptathlon).

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