

# *More Cuban finalists in World Athletics Championships*

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Havana, August 20 (JIT)-- A mixture of tranquility, suspense and frustration garnished the Cuban performance in today's morning session at the 19th World Championships in Athletics 2023, sealed with two advances to the finals.

The calmest was sprinter Roxana Gómez with her advance to the semifinals, while the candidates for medals were Silinda Morales and high jumper Luis Enrique Zayas.

The Santiago native suffered unspeakably to get on the train of finalists and kept his followers in extreme tension. He needed 10 jumps to clear the rod at 2.28 meters, the limit that defined the 13 aspirants. There was no need to extend to the 2.30 meters that marked the expedited qualification.

The Pan American champion of Lima 2019 gave up the 2.14 meters, but to the surprise of many, he signed a pair of fouls over 2.18 meters. After overcoming the 2.22 without surprises, he passed over 2.25 and the 2.28 in extremis, to secure the last place.

"It was very hard qualifying, I didn't run well. I have to perfect the final entry position for the jump, which is fundamental for the technique above," he told JIT after an almost three-hour-long test, in which he was supported from the stands by Cuban world record holder Javier Sotomayor.

"This moment is over. Now I have to focus on improving the bad things I did. I want the final to be better than last year's," added Zayas, sixth place in Oregon 2022.

The crowd in attendance enjoyed how Qatar's Tokyo 2020 Olympic champion, Mutaz Essa Barshim, almost "played" with the rest of the contestants. His jumping economy was impressive, as he cleared heights of 2.22, 2.25 and 2.28 meters without fail.

The other Tokyo 2020 champion, Italy's Gianmarco Tamberi, whose presentations continue to be an enjoyable show with applause, greetings to the public and constant movement while waiting for each turn, experienced a different story.

This time his particular party extended longer than expected, given his failures in 2.25 and two in 2.28. "With the water on his neck," he beat the mark. Hundreds in the stadium and millions around the world, who will be waiting for another historic battle with Barshim next Tuesday night, sighed with him.

#### SILINDA DELIVERED

Without impressing on the circle, Silinda Morales crossed the threshold that separated her from the discus throw final with a throw of 62.73 meters, in the range of what was expected for her debut in the event.

That record placed her ninth in a list of 12 finalists, which had in its highest position the U.S. Olympic queen Valarie Allman, who comfortably sent the implement to 67.14 meters.

Hilda Elisa Ramos, trainer of the Camagüey native, assured that for this difficult first moment she behaved as expected, although she must correct mistakes in her movements inside the circle.

"She was kind of slipping and that's why the first foul shot. Then she held back to avoid another null attempt that could put pressure on her. That made her hold the move," described the experienced coach.

#### LIME AND SAND ON THE TRACK

Roxana did not push herself too hard to cover the 400 meters in 50.86 seconds, which was good enough for the second place in her heat and a good dose of confidence for Monday's semifinal.

The Dominican Marileidy Paulino, Tokyo 2020 runner-up, was the only one under 50 seconds (49.90). Given the absence of American star Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone and the discreet performance of Uibo - she did not pass the first instance-, she begins to "smell gold".

Unfortunately, the inexperience took its toll on Yunisleidys de la Caridad García, for the first time rubbing shoulders with the elite of the 100 meters sprint. Waiting for the shot, her nerves betrayed her and her false start was penalized with a disqualification in her heat.

Her tears were the greatest sign of frustration for the Central Caribbean queen of the hectometer, who will have to assume as well as possible this hard experience, because she still has to compete in the 200 meters and the 4x100 relay.

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