

Cuba seeks its first medal in Budapest 2023 on Monday

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Triple jumper Lázaro Martínez

Havana, August 21 (RHC) - Cuban athletics is looking for its first medal this Monday at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest, when Lázaro Martínez and Cristian Nápoles will compete in the triple jump final.

Four Cubans will perform in the new National Athletics Center of the Hungarian capital: in addition to the triple jumpers on the track will be Roxana Gómez (400m semis, and Zurian Hechavarría (heats 400 c/v).

The attention of the Cubans will be on the triple jump, from 1.40 pm Cuban time, where Martinez and Napoles arrive with options to discuss medals, after finishing third (17.12) and fifth (16.95), respectively, in the qualifying round.

Martinez, 25 years old and world indoor champion in Belgrade-2022, flew this season to 17.51m, the best of his life, and Napoles (25) flew to 17.34, four centimeters short of his all-time high.

With the last-minute absence due to injury of the reigning champion, the Cuban nationalized Portuguese Pedro Pablo Pichardo, the experts point to the 18-year-old Jamaican U20 world champion prodigy Jaydon Hibbert, leader of the world list (17.87) and impressive in the qualifiers (17.70), as the favorite.

Nor do they rule out Burkina Faso's Hughes Fabrice Zango, bronze medalist at Tokyo-2020 and runner-up at Eugene-2022, one of the men who has broken the 18m barrier (18.07) and this year owner of 17.81.

The first to appear on the track will be Santiago-born Hechavarría (28 years old), in the third heat of the 400m hurdles (1.06 pm, Cuban time), where she will have to place among the first four to advance to the semifinals or seek entry by time.

Four runners have run better times than the Cuban, among them the Jamaican favorite Andrenette Knight (53.26 sec).

World champion in the 4x400 relay in Silesia-2021, Zurian returned to the track this season after more than a year's absence due to injury, and won the title at the Centrocaribes in San Salvador (55.52).

To aspire to advance to the semifinals, she will have to come close to or better her personal record (54.99).

The island's participation is completed with Roxana Gómez in the 400m semifinals.

Gomez (24 years old) will take to the track at 3:20pm Cuban time in the second heat of the semis, where the best time of the year is the Dutch Klaver (49.81) and four others have very similar times.

If the student of Ricardo Molina "the Chinese" approaches the time that placed her in the Olympic final of Tokyo-2020 (49.71), she has all the chances to be included again among the eight best in the world.

In the heats she ran a race without wearing herself out too much (50.86 sec), close to her best time of the season (50.60), achieved in May in Forbach (France).

Cuba took 20 athletes to the Budapest World Championships and aims to improve on last year's performance in Eugene, where it left without a medal for the first time in history.

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