

Keys to a crucial game against Honduras in the CONCACAF League

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Santo Domingo, October 12 (JIT) - Less than 24 hours separate the Cuban national team from its next match in the CONCACAF Nations League 2023-2024, which will take place at the Félix Sánchez Olympic Stadium in this city.

The match will take place against one of the best teams in the area, which is not living its best moment but seems considerably superior to previous teams in this competition.

The Honduran forward line is populated by top players such as Alberth Elis, Luis Palma and star player Antony Lozano, who plays for Getafe in Spain's La Liga. For this reason, keeping the goal intact will be even more difficult, an issue that the high command of the Lions of the Caribbean is handling.

"It will be a strong match against a World Cup team, with very good players, who have called up their best players. We face it excited and with great desire to walk in the competition," described to JIT the Cuban technical director Yunielys Castillo.

"Despite notable absences in the squad, we have players ready and very focused on the game, which gives us a lot of confidence. It's up to them to take responsibility on the field," he commented.

Absences up front and the confidence that comes from a good defensive performance in previous matches suggest that Castillo will propose a game in which he will be looking to take care of an opponent that can create danger.

"Obviously the absence of players of proven quality in the attack weighs, but we have given confidence to everyone, including the younger players. They have had minutes and that serves to prepare them for this game," he said.

"We intend, by philosophy, to set up schemes that prioritize defensive order when we don't have the ball and quick transitions when we recover it," he added.

"We know our opponent's strengths, but also their weaknesses. We will try to bother them and make them uncomfortable there, to look for a positive result. As professor Ronaldo Veitía used to say: you don't work to lose. It does not cross our minds that we are training to lose", said the coach.

In attack, perhaps the biggest concern due to the absences, lies the possibility of hurting an opponent that will probably bet on going forward and not defending. It will be up to Yasnier Matos and William Pozo to take advantage of the spaces left by the H team's advanced defense.

The midfield will be of great importance, if Castillo opts for the line of five that he is used to in defense. The interiors, in addition to containment, will have to try to make the possessions last when it is not possible to get out quickly. The Cuban attack should be organized in that zone, while the double pivot will have a lot of work to do, incorporating the help from the wings, understanding that the bicolor likes to do damage from the sides.

There are several keys to success in defense: order, especially in the first minutes of each half; austerity and cleanliness. They must not take risks with unsafe exits and destroy the danger as far as possible from the goal defended by Raico Arozarena.

The latter will play a leading role in the Antillean eleven, considering the excellent level at which he is performing. "I feel ready from the mental and physical point of view. I have had a good preparation and I am very excited and looking forward to the day of the match," said the Pinar del Río goalkeeper.

"We have done an excellent job in the defensive aspect, with two consecutive clean sheets. We have worked the five-man line very well and all that can give us good results this Thursday", concluded Arozarena.

In any case, it will be a very difficult exercise with maximum demands in terms of skills and concentration.

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