

# *Cuban boxing star lives an unforgettable journey in Santiago-2023*

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**Julio La Cruz / Photo: Mónica Ramírez**

Santiago de Chile, October 20 (RHC) - Two-time Olympic champion Julio César La Cruz lived an illustrious day in Santiago-2023 on Friday, when he debuted with a triumph in the presence of IOC president Thomas Bach and star Roberto "Mano" de Piedra Duran and carried the national flag in the opening ceremony.

34 years old and weighing 92 kg, La Cruz made his debut in the morning on the ring of the continental event in the Chilean capital with a 5-0 points victory over American Jamar Talley, a difficult opponent who won the first round and forced him to use all his mastery in the second and third.

The day at the Olympic Training Center in Ñuñoa had luxury spectators: IOC President Thomas Bach, boxing legend Mano de Piedra Durán and former boxer Serguei Bubka were in attendance.

In an aside with Cuban journalists, Bach wished success to the island's athletes and urged them to obtain many qualifiers for Paris-2024, while Durán, a fervent admirer of Cuban boxing, presented La Cruz with a cap.

"It is an honor not only for me as a boxer, but for the world boxing family that a great champion like "Mano de Piedra" Duran is here witnessing and supporting the young talents," said La Cruz, also a four-time world champion.

After the fight, the Panamanian idol personally greeted the Cuban fighter with remarkable signs of affection.

The captain of Los Domadores de Cuba thanked the gesture and said he will proudly keep the cap in his personal museum at his residence.

Regarding the honor of carrying the Cuban flag at the opening ceremony, he expressed that he would take the place of the greatest Cuban sportsman, his friend Mijaín López, on a happy day for Cubans, who celebrated the Day of Culture.

La Cruz is one of the six boxers who holds three Pan American crowns - Guafdalajara-2011, Toronto-2015 and Lima-2019, and if he wins he would reach four belts, a feat to which his compatriot Lazaro Alvarez also aspires.

The finalists in each division in Santiago-2023 will get tickets to Paris-2024.

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