

Jasiel Rivero leads Cuban basketball to AmeriCup qualifier

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Jasiel Rivero

Havana, February 15 (ACN) - The player of Israel's Maccabi Haifa, Jasiel Rivero, leads the Cuban men's basketball team that will debut against the United States next 22nd in the qualifying tournament of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) for the AmeriCup 2025.

The 12-player roster was released on Wednesday by the island's top basketball management.

Three players who play abroad have been called up to the team for the first time: Reinaldo García, Johan Carlos Gutiérrez and Howard Sant Roos.

Other players called up are guards Marcos Chacón and Sigfredo Casero, shooting guard Yoanki Mencía, power forwards Marlon Díaz and Pedro Bombino, and center Yoel Cubillas.

Onel Planas, who was presented last September as the new coach of the Cuban team, told the press that his goal is to qualify for next year's Americup, to be held in Nicaragua from August 23 to 31.

The Cuban team is part of Group D of the FIBA Americas qualifier along with the United States, Puerto Rico and Bahamas, which they will face twice under the home-and-away format during three windows, scheduled for this month and November of this year, and then in February 2025.

"We know that the grouping is difficult, but the goal will be to guarantee one of the three tickets and we will work hard to achieve it," expressed coach Onel Planas.

He added that in the six weeks of preparation he has emphasized defense, especially to minimize the effectiveness of the rivals in shooting at the hoop. Referring to what the three basketball players who are joining the Cuban national team for the first time could contribute, Planas said that they would support the work from the perimeter and enhance the offensive transitions.

In the case of Gutiérrez, he also said that he would give speed to the attack, while García and Sant Roos would bring competitive experience to the squad. The Cubans will play their first away game against the Americans on February 22, and then they will host the American team at the Ciudad Deportiva Coliseum on Sunday, February 25.

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