

Cuban volleyball team to play two friendlies with Argentina in preparation for VNL

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Havana, March 26 (RHC) - Cuba's men's volleyball team, the only team on the island with options to qualify for Paris-2024, will play two friendly matches against Argentina in view of the Nations League (VNL), the last qualifying round for the Olympic qualification.

"We will play two matches against the Argentine national team on May 17 and 18 in the city of Misiones and one day later we will travel to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the first stop of the VNL," Ariel Sainz,

president of the Cuban Volleyball Federation, told Radio Habana Cuba (www.radiohc.cu).

Despite standing out in the 2023 Pre-Olympics, neither Cuba nor Argentina were able to get Olympic and Olympic quotas and will have their last chances according to the world ranking at the end of the VNL.

Cuba was at the gates of Paris in the Rio de Janeiro Pre-Olympic, with five wins and two losses and third place in its group, behind Germany and Brazil. Among its victories was one against world champion Italy.

"In addition to encountering a top-level sextet, the stay in Argentina also has an adaptive character, since Misiones is geographically very close to the border with Brazil," added Sainz.

Both teams have also met in previous years, the last one in 2023 for the Pre-Olympic with a 1-1 score.

All the Cuban volleyball stars, including star Robertlandy Simón (Piacenza), will return to the island at the end of April or in the first days of May, said Saínz and specified that the 14 that will travel to Argentina will be the same that will be in the first week of the VNL.

The only ones who will travel directly to Argentina are Miguel Angel López (Sada Cruzeiro) and Osniel Mergarejo (Milan), who will travel from Brazil and Italy.

Cuba is currently in eleventh place in the world ranking (236.96 points) and is obliged to have a superlative performance in the VNL to get a place in Paris, while Argentina is in sixth place (314.35 points) and only a debacle would leave it out of the party under the five rings.

Germany, Brazil, the United States, Japan, Poland, Canada and the United States have qualified for the 2023 Pre-Olympics, joining hosts and reigning Olympic champions France.

The main contenders for the remaining five berths are Italy (ranked third), Argentina (sixth), Slovenia (seventh), Serbia (ninth), Cuba (eleventh), the Netherlands (13th), Turkey (14th) and Iran (15th).

In keeping with the IOC's territoriality criteria, one of the five remaining tickets to Paris-2024 will go to the best African team, currently Egypt (18th).

In the last five Olympic editions, Cuba's squad was only able to participate in Rio-2016, where it placed eleventh.

Among Jesús Cruz's pupils, there is great motivation and desire to be in the Olympic Games. The final battle for Paris-2024 will begin on May 21-26, when they face Japan, Germany, Brazil and Iran in the first week of the VNL.

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