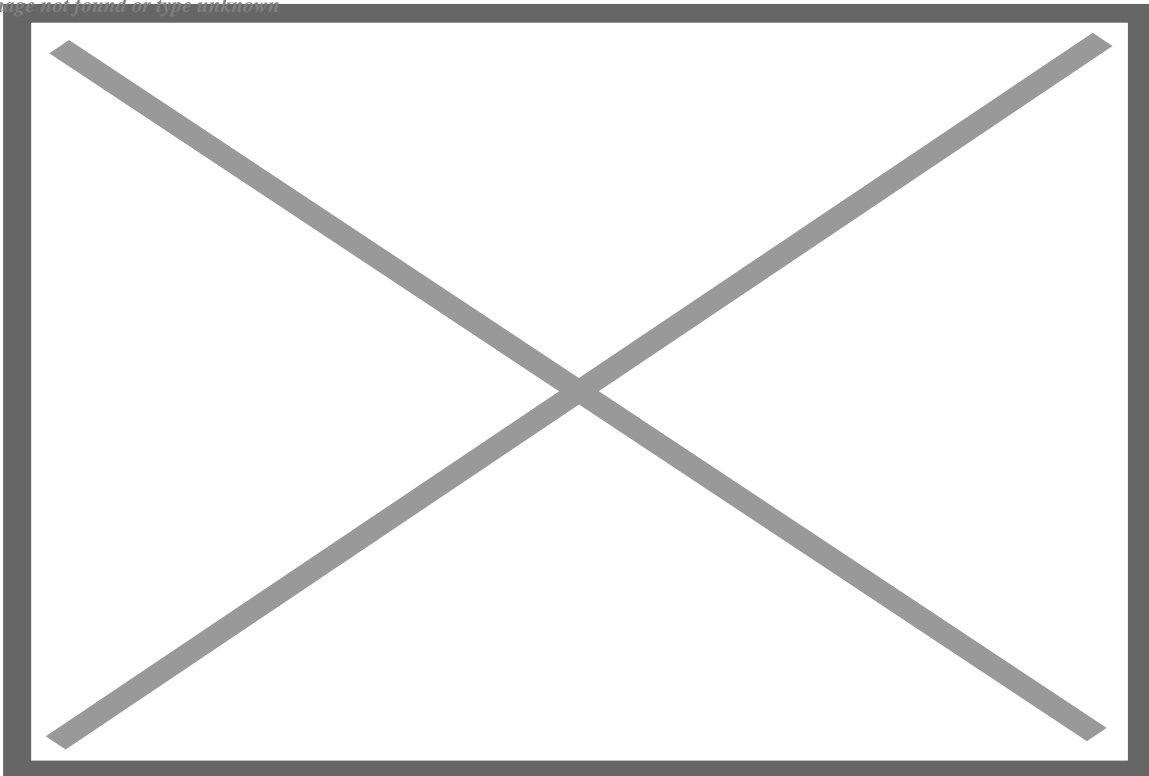


Diaz and Alayo beat beach volleyball champions

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Havana, April 20 (JIT) -- Cubans Noslen Diaz and Jorge Luis Alayo, defeated (21-19, 21-18) the reigning world champions, Czechs Ondrej Perusic and David Schweiner, and advanced to the quarterfinals in the elite phase of the World Beach Volleyball Pro Tour 2024, in Tepic, Mexico.

The Antilleans put on another sensational performance to maintain their hopes of winning a ticket to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, through the universal ranking qualification process.

Their next opponents will be the Spaniards Pablo Herrera and Adrian Gavira, who won Group C undefeated in three starts, as well as in their commitment in the round of 12.

If they win, Francisco Alvarez Cutiño's students will reach the semifinals for the fourth consecutive time. Previously, they did so at the challenge category events in Recife and Saquarema, in Brazil, where they won the silver medals, and in Guadalajara, where they finished in fourth place.

This Friday, the European world title holders, both 29 years old, finished second in the B key with two victories. The Antilleans closed with one win and two setbacks in D, but also continued to the round of 12.

In the duel, Noslen and Jorge Luis baffled the champions of Mexico 2023, who could not stop the "Caribbean fury" despite finishing without wide differences in attack (28-27), blocking (3-3), service (1-3) and defense (15-14), although with more errors than the combative opponents (4-10).

Alayo finished as the top scorer of the match, scoring 28 points, 23 of them in spikes and three in blocks. His compatriot Diaz contributed three on attacks and one on service, but a lot on the defensive side.

The Cubans began their journey in Tepic with success in the qualifying round against the Norwegians Hendrik Mol and Mathias Berntsen, in three sets. Thus they made their debut in the main draw of the 16 finalists in the highest level tournament of Pro Tour Mundial.

Placed in group D, they stumbled against the Germans Nils Ehlers (30 years old) and Clemens Wickler (28), superior in attack (28-23), blocking (6-0) and service (2-1), which gave them a 2-0 win (22-20, 21-14).

The tandem of Artemisa and Villa Clara reacted against Mexico's Miguel Sarabia Delgado and Gabriel Cruz Mendoza, whom they swept with a 21-18 and 21-12 score, in a match in which the blocking of the Cubans shone.

This Friday, despite losing (21-16, 21-19) against Americans Miles Partain and Andrew Benesh in their last match of the key, they had already secured their place among the 16 that would seek to reach the podium.

However, the preparation and dedication of Noslen and Alayo was superior to the opponent that awaited them in the round of 12, the duo of Perusic and Scheweiner, which holds the world crown and significant experience in elite tournaments. The story of the young Cubans continues with only one goal, Paris 2024.

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