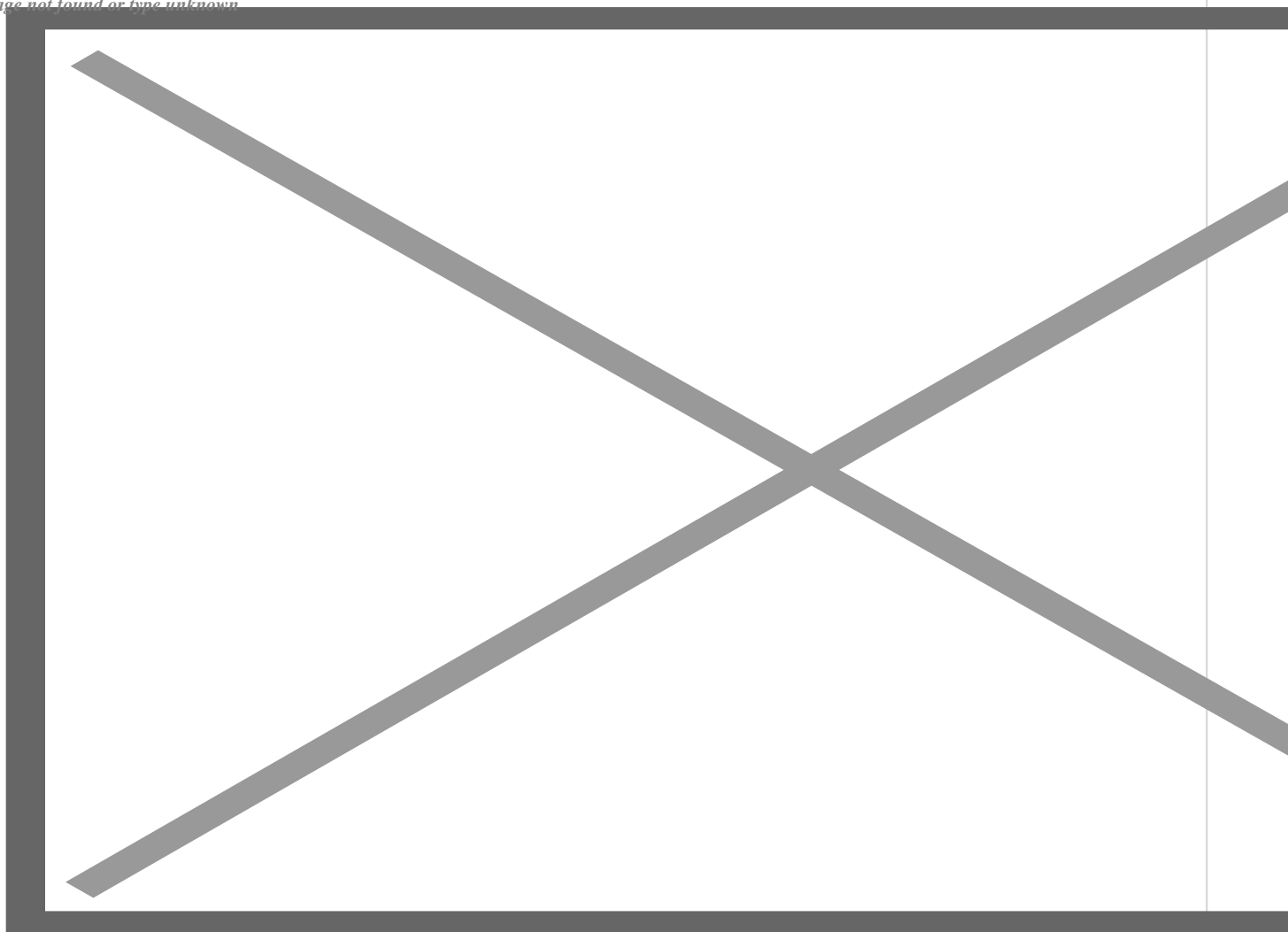


Cuban volleyball: Now or never before the whip Germany

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One of Cuba's greatest: Robertlandy Simon

Havana, May 23 (RHC) - The Cuban men's volleyball team faces this Thursday its executioner of recent years, Germany, in its second outing in the first week of the Volleyball Nations League (VNL), in Rio of Janeiro.

Since the 2010 World League, Cuba has not beaten Germany on a volleyball court, so today's match reaches another dimension for those from the Caribbean.

A victory would allow them to continue adding points in the ranking for Paris-2024 and would give them revenge against the Europeans after almost five decades of suffering.

The Cubans, who are seeking Olympic qualification, debuted on Tuesday in the VNL-2024 with a 3-1 victory against the powerful Brazil, and climbed from 11th to tenth place in the world ranking, the criterion for granting the last five Olympic tickets to Paris.

With some absences on their roster, but illustrious veterans such as Robertlandy Simón and Michael "el Ruso" Sánchez, and a golden generation led by Miguel Angel López and Marlon Yant, the Cubans have put together a team with the potential to fight against the best in the world.

Added to this are players like point guard Christian Thondike and center back Javier Concepción, who have shown notable improvement in the last two years.

After the resounding victory against Brazil, Jesús Cruz's students added 12.7 points in the world ranking and dropped more than seven points in relation to Serbia, their predecessor in the ranking and 3-1 winner over Iran on Wednesday.

The list of teams still seeking Olympic qualification is led by world champion Italy (347.58 units), followed by Argentina (308.29), Slovenia (307.30), Serbia (258.22), Cuba (249.66) and the Netherlands (214.40).

If Cuba beats Germany in three sets this Thursday it would add 9.68 units in the ranking, if it does so 3-1 (7.18) and 3-2 (4.68).

On the most recent date, in which Cuba rested, Serbia beat Iran 3-1, Italy beat Germany 3-0, Poland beat the USA 3-0, Slovenia beat the Netherlands 3-0,

This Thursday, Serbia collides with already qualified Japan.

Germany, which has already qualified for Paris-2024, gave a rest in this first week to the veteran Grozer, a mainstay in his classification in last year's Pre-Olympic.

However, he has a high-level team in his squad, with figures such as captain Fromm and center back Masse, two of the most outstanding in the defeat against the world champion Italy on Wednesday.

According to the competition calendar, after this Thursday's clash, the Cubans will compete on Friday against Japan, and on Saturday against Iran.

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