

Hugo Franco shot the right arrows... and he succeeded.

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Hugo Franco and his coach

Havana, Jun 19 (JIT) - After the first 24 hours following the feat, Cuba's Hugo Franco can reflect more objectively on what he experienced on Monday in the Turkish city of Antalya, where he secured a place among the candidates for the individual recurve archery throne at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

A full day has passed since emotions overflowed in an eternal embrace with their coach Reiter Tellez. The joy of the dream fulfilled, the congratulations in person and from afar, the promises made reality and the confidence backed up with the result. So much for a single day.

Getting one of the last places available for the next Olympic archery competition was like "holding on to a burning nail". There was no lack of tension, but there was also the certainty that there was a chance and it was necessary to take advantage of it.

After assimilating the moment, dedications and thanks were essential.

"To all those who helped us, but especially to the president of our federation Tamara Jimenez and the Cuban Olympic Committee, which gave us the opportunity to be here," says Reiter, equally happy and

satisfied with every support received, also by the entire technical staff of the sport on the island.

It would be too pretentious to describe what we experienced during the five matches played until the bronze medal was won. Each moment had a special meaning and no one better to express it than Hugo, from Pinar del Rio and captain of the Cuban team, who can boast of the upcoming opportunity to shoot his arrows in the Esplanade of Les Invalides, the iconic scenario of his next challenge.

What was the most difficult part of the tournament?

Besides the wind and the tremendous heat, I think the most difficult thing to overcome was the psychological pressure. Since before leaving Cuba I was convinced that it was going to be important to stay focused and even more so now, when you know what you are facing, what is at stake. I also knew how hard you have been working and that there were a lot of people waiting for this result.

The most difficult match?

I enjoyed my whole tournament, but the first match was the most difficult (against Czech Richard Krejci). I was under a lot of pressure because that's when you "break the ice", as they say... then I loosened up, I felt more confident in what I was doing, it was like I was familiar with the fact of being there.

And the one you won in the quarterfinals to secure the ticket?

I knew I had to shoot well. I even considered the variant of the playoff... which also existed, because later they increased the number of places in dispute to five. Luckily I won, I knew how to do it well and I got in directly. The Iranian (Faez Mohammadizardkhaneh) is only 16 years old, twice my age, but he shot very well. It was clear to me that my only option was to win, to win... I had told my coach "this is against anyone, there is no small rival". It's a high level competition and everyone wants to be in the Olympics.

What's next?

We are already safe in Paris, we just need to continue to prepare, participate and do well as we have done so far. I think I will have, if anything, two days to share with the family, to accompany my wife, because soon we will be parents again and that time is very important for me. She has accompanied me in each of these moments, in the most complex ones too, and she follows everything from a distance.

How much of Reiter is there in each of these results?

Reiter is my second father. I started with him from the junior national team and we had excellent results. Then came a time when perhaps inexperience led me to drop off a bit.

We are both proud of what we have achieved and I remember very well that one day I told him "I want to be among the best in the world", and he answered me that we had to work hard to achieve it... that is always his phrase... "you have to work".

Even now he told me we have come this far, we have to keep looking for more preparation. I am eternally grateful, he has been part of very important moments in my life and has always been there with me to solve many of my problems, which he makes his own.

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