

Sports News Roundup Dec. 30



Sport Summary: Veracruz-2014

Cuba recovered regional supremacy in the 22nd Central American and Caribbean Games Veracruz-2014, which they had ceded by their absence from Mayaguez 2010, by harvesting 123 gold medals, eight more than those achieved by the hosts Mexico.

With a young delegation of 543 athletes, led by their Olympic and world champions, Cuba demonstrated its great sporting potential in Veracruz, dominating 12 of the 26 sports.

In spite of not submitting competitors in more than 100 competitions, and the drive of nations like Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela, Cuba maintained its reign, which began in Panama-1970, excluding absences, in San Salvador-2002 and Mayaguez 2010, due to lack of security for their athletes.

The advantage of hosting the Games gave Mexico the opportunity to enter athletes in all disciplines and have the support of the fans, making the Cuban victory even more outstanding.

Athletics, with 23 titles, was Cuba's star in the competition, but also shining were: shooting (14 golds), judo (13), wrestling and rowing, both with 10 and the latter with a perfect performance, boxing (9), and boating and biking, 8 each.

Deserving a special mention are artistic gymnastics, which retook the golden road after 16 years, to take four golds, and the modern pentathlon, the owner of two.

At the individual level, Olympic or world champions left no doubts as to their class; Mijain Lopez (wrestling), Idalis Ortiz (judo), Leiris Pupo (shooting), Robeisy Ramirez, Roniel Iglesias and Julio César La Cruz (boxing), Rafael Alba (taekwondo), and Yarisley Silva and Yipsi Moreno (athletics), the latter with a record in her discipline, in her farewell to the sport.

However, the most outstanding results were provided by the cyclist, Marlies Mejías, winning 5 titles in track and road competitions, cyclist Lisandra Guerra, and shooter Jorge Grau (both with 4 golds) and rower Angel Fournier (with 3).

Others worthy of praise, were the gymnast, Manrique Larduet, winner of seven medals, and middle distance runner Andy González, champion at 800 and 1500 meters.

In a humanitarian sense, also deserving of mention, the canoeist, Fidel Antonio Vargas, who saved the life of a fellow competitor, and from taekwondo Robelis Despaigne, for being the first to worry about the health of a rival who was knocked out by a blow.

In team sports, Cuba also shone with victory number 15 in baseball, hockey doubles (m and w) and beach volleyball (m and w).

The event was attended by more than 5,000 athletes from 31 countries, of which 21 were able to climb the podium.

432 sets of medals were distributed and 56 records broken, 12 of these by Cuban athletes.

In addition to Mexico, winner of 115 titles, just eight fewer than Cuba, Colombia, third with 70 crowns, and Guatemala, seventh with 15 were also highlighted.

Mexico almost swept the diving, gaining seven titles out of 9, and in swimming, with 24 crowns - five won by its star, Fernanda Gonzalez.

The Venezuelan swimmer Andreina Pinto was elevated to 'Queen of the Games', winning eight medals from the pool, including 6 gold, while Colombia's biggest stars were their weightlifting team with 16 golds, and world champion and Olympic triple jump runner-up champ, Caterine Ibarguen.

Two stars shone for Guatemala, Olympic walking runner-up champ Erick Barrondo who, after his controversial disqualification in his favorite event - the 50 km, achieved a great mental recovery and won the 20 km race, and Kevin Córdón who took two golds in badminton.

Veracruz-2014 awarded 104 tickets in 16 sports for the Pan American Games in Toronto, Canada, the major sporting event of the continent in 2015 and prelude to the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro-2016.

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