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Tokyo, July 27 (RHC)-- Rafael Alba opened Cuba's medal tally at Tokyo 2020 by winning bronze in taekwondo, on a day in which Cuba also saw its first two fighters to step into the ring, Julio Cesar La Cruz and Roniel Iglesias, triumph.

Considered by many experts as one of the candidates for gold, Alba (+80 kg) surprisingly fell in his first bout 11-8 against Dejan Georgievski (Macedonia), the eventual silver medalist.

But the Santiago de Cuba native had the necessary mental strength to recover and link two victories in a row, the last of them for the bronze medal, Cuba's first in the event.

In his second fight, Alba defeated Seydou Gbane (Ivory Coast) 8-2 and in the third, for the Olympic podium, he won a close decision in the last seconds 5-4 against China's Hongyi Sun.

With his medal, the two-time world champion vindicated his Rio 2016 result, when he was also among the favorites and missed out on a medal. Cuban boxing debuted with two successes, in the fists of Julio César La Cruz and Roniel Iglesias.

Roniel had to appeal to his better physical preparation, to overcome the Japanese Sewon Okasawa, a southpaw who was difficult for him because of his tangled style. The vote was split 3-2, which shows the parity of the fight.

La Cruz, captain of the Cuban national team, had a calmer debut, walking the distance against a man stronger than him, but inferior in quality, the Kenyan Achomy Ochola, whom he dominated in the three rounds to deserve a 5-0 verdict.

In the weightlifting, Marina Rodriguez, from the capital, repeated her eighth place from Rio 2016. The Cuban lifted 98 kg in snatch and 123 in rebound, for a biathlon of 221.

Pistoleros Laina Perez and Jorge Grau finished in 14th place among 20 pairs, one of the new modalities of sport shooting, the mixed air pistol.

This Wednesday 28th in Tokyo, the main attraction of Cuban sport will be judo fighter Ivan Silva, world runner-up in the 90 kg category. Boxing will also be in the spotlight as Lazaro Alvarez (57 kg) and Arlen Lopez (81 kg) will try to maintain their victorious pace when they step into the ring.

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