

Leuris Pupo first Cuban to qualify for Paris-2024 and Pan American champion in Lima

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Pupo, Jorge Felix and Meinardo

Havana, November 12 (RHC) - Cuba's Leuris Pupo, the best Cuban shooter in history, became on Saturday the first Cuban athlete to qualify for Paris-2024, by winning gold in 25m rapid fire pistol at the Pan American Shooting Championship in Lima.

In a thrilling finish, the double Olympic medalist managed to tie dramatically with American Henry Laverett in the eighth and last round of shooting in the final (both 30 points) and forced to go to the shoot off (tiebreaker round).

Both scored in 3 of the 5 shots in the first shoot off and in the second one, the London-2012 champion and Tokyo-2020 runner-up appealed to his nerves of steel and got four to the North American's three, who was left with the silver medal.

With his triumph, Pupo, 45 years old and illustrious son of Holguin (northeastern Cuba) qualifies to his seventh consecutive Olympic Games since his debut in Sydney-2000.

"I am very excited. I was a little pressured in the last heat, it was a heartbreaker, but in the shoot off I was very focused and confident that I could do my job and get the gold and Olympic qualification," Pupo said from Lima in statements to Radio Habana Cuba (www.radiohc.cu).

Laureate coach Meinardo Torres considered that the fight for the Olympic ticket was "as hard" as the Olympic final in Tokyo-2020. "Nobody wanted to give in and experience and concentration prevailed," he added, praising the work of the best Cuban shooter in history.

The three Cubans entered in the 25m pistol, Jorge Felix Alvarez and Alejandro Delgado, were also included in the final eight. Lima -2019 Pan American champion Jorge Felix, who led the qualifying phase with 579 points, finished in a creditable fifth place.

Pupo and Jorge Felix also guaranteed their places for Santiago de Chile-2023.

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