

Top stars to participate in Judo Grand Prix



May 24 - Olympic and world champions head the list of athletes from 47 countries and regions to compete in the first Judo Grand Prix that will be held in the Cuban capital, Havana, from June 6th to the 8th.

Top athletes from Brazil, the US and Germany have already confirmed their participation in the event, while other countries with strong judo traditions, such as South Korea, Russia and France, are yet to announce their lineups, reports Xinhua.

According to the organizers, more than 400 athletes are expected to compete in the event, which will be televised to 135 countries.

Brazil, a judo powerhouse in the Americas, will feature 2012 Olympic gold-medal winner Sarah Menezes, world silver-medal winners Mayra Aguiar, Erika Miranda, and Hugo Pesanha in the event.

The US squad includes Kayla Harrison, the 2010 world gold medal winner who is returning to the mat after a year's absence to challenge Cuba's Yalennis Castillo, who came in second at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Germany will field Laura Vargas-Koch, the 2013 world silver medalist, heading a strong team that includes Mareen Krach, Miryam Roper and Francisca Konitz.

Konitz defeated Cuban Olympic and world champion Idalys Ortiz at the Dusseldorf Grand Prix in February.

The tournament in Cuba will have points to qualify for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

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