

# *Cuba and Puerto Rico face off in Volley Pan American Cup*

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## **Cuba-Puerto Rico for success in Voli Pan American Cup**

Havana, September 17 (RHC/JIT)-- Cuba and Puerto Rico face each other today, Friday, in the last preliminary match in search of their first success in the Women's Pan American Volleyball Cup in Santo Domingo after losing to the United States and Mexico, respectively.

Both teams close the standings with four setbacks, the Cubans with two points and the Puerto Ricans with one. Whatever the result between them, they only have options to discuss the fifth place tomorrow, Saturday.

The Dominicans are undefeated in their four outings, with 20 points, and the Americans with 19 points, and will compete tomorrow for the lead and have to play in the semifinals against Mexico, while the second place team will play against Canada.

On Thursday, the United States defeated Cuba in straight sets 3-0 (25-11, 25-17, 25-18) in a match in which Veronica Jones-Perry returned to the court after a day off and was the top scorer with 14 points, followed by Alison Bastianelli with 11, including four aces, according to the Norceca website.

For the Cubans, the top scorers were corner player Yamilena Ruiz and opposite Dezirett Madan, both with six points, while assistant attacker Claudia Tarin could only add three.

The coach of the Cuban girls, Joel Olazabal, emphasized that "in this game we already had to substitute some players with a lot of pain in their bodies because they are tired due to the lack of training."

"The truth is that it has been difficult to come in these conditions, so we are making an effort to play our best," he added.

For his part Karch Kiraly, technical director of the northerners, pointed out that "our young setter Ellen Glock did a great job both yesterday and today. Our team didn't start off very well in the match as we made several errors that we later corrected and were able to come out with the victory".

In another result Mexico secured their second win by defeating Puerto Rico 3-1 (19-25, 25-15, 25-13, 25-15) to advance to the semifinals. The winners outscored their rivals in aces (14-2), blocks (11-6) and attacks (47-30).

Karina Flores was the top scorer for the winners with 18 points, including four blocks and four aces, followed by Grecia Castro and Maria Rodriguez with 16 each. Aida Bauza led Puerto Rico with 12 points.

In the last match of the night, the Dominican Republic dominated Canada 3-0 (25-11, 25-15, 25-20) and tied with the United States for the lead in the standings, so they will meet on Friday to decide the winner of the preliminary phase, who will be Mexico's opponent in Saturday's semifinals, ranked fourth. The second-place finisher will play Canada.

Gaila Gonzalez again produced more for the hosts with 12 points, including three blocks and two aces, the only one in double digits, as Jineiry Martinez was held to nine. For the Canadians Hillary Howe led the offense with 10 points.

The Canadians committed 29 of their own faults to 19 by the Dominicans, who had 10 aces against 3 by their opponents.

Brazilian Marcos Kwiek, coach of the local team, highlighted that "our service was very aggressive today. After the first two sets we lowered a little bit the intensity of our serve and Canada was serving strong. I think that was also positive for us to face that difficulty to focus more on the game. Nobody is going to give us anything for free.

Shannon Wintzer, the Canadian coach, lamented that "we made a lot of mistakes. Our team is very young and the Dominican Republic played with their 'A' team. I think it was a good experience for the girls to face a team of that level.



**Radio Habana Cuba**