

Cuba returns to the top of world boxing in 2021

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Havana, January 1 (Prensa Latina)-- Cuba returned to the top of the International Boxing Association (AIBA) in 2021, backed by the leadership in the Tokyo Olympic Games, the Belgrade World Championships and the Junior Pan American Games.

Two of its exponents, light welterweight Andy Cruz and cruiserweight Julio César la Cruz, monopolized the headlines throughout the year as the only boxers to celebrate golden scepters in the Olympic and universal fights.

In the ring, the fists of the Cuban School extended the historical record in Tokyo to 41 titles in the five rings and 80 golden crowns in universal competitions after the action in Belgrade.

In addition to Cuba, boxing in the Americas celebrated individual performances by the United States, Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago.

Olympic fists

Without being able to hold the qualifying tournament due to the Covid-19, AIBA decided to grant the quotas to the Tokyo Olympic Games by ranking and in that sense, Cuba presented seven boxers in the capital of Japan.

At the Kokugikan Arena, Roniel Iglesias (69 kg), Arlen Lopez (81 kg) and Julio Cesar La Cruz (91 kg) celebrated their second championship belts at this level; meanwhile, Andy Cruz (63, 5 kg) conquered the only absent gold in his career; while Lazaro Alvarez (57 kg) added his third bronze medal under the shadow of the five rings.

Nine years later, Iglesias climbed back to the top of the Olympic podium and in Tokyo he beat Japan's Sewonrets Okazawa 3-2, USA's Delante Johnson 5-0, Russia's Andrei Zamkovoi 5-0 and in the final, Britain's Pat McCormack 5-0. In the middleweights, Lopez exhibited the sporting form of Rio de Janeiro 2016 and in his new division of 81 kilos triumphed against Algerian Mohammed Houmri 5-0, Mexican Rogelio Romeo 5-0, Azeri Loren Alfonso 5-0 and for the crown defeated English Benjamin Whittaker 4-1-.

La Cruz silenced comments when he moved up to heavyweight and dominated Russian Muslim Gadzhimagomedov in the grand final by unanimous vote of 5-0, to celebrate a trophy with victory over Kenyan Elly Ochola (5.0), Spaniard Enmanuel Reyes (4-1) and Brazilian Abner Teixeira (4-1).

The fourth golden prize for the Cubans came through Cruz, who with his speed, constant punching and versatility repeated his dominance over the American Keyshawn Davis, to win the first prize in his career.

Lázaro Álvarez lost 3-2 in the semifinals to Russian Albert Batyrgaziev, and was left in bronze to emulate his previous performances in the London 2012 and Rio de Janeiro 2016 versions.

In Tokyo 2020, Brazil's Hebert Sousa was the big surprise of the boxing tournament when he defeated Ukraine's Oleksandr Khyzhniak by knockout in the 75 kilograms and, together with Teixeira's bronze, placed the South American giant in the overall medal standings.

The United States placed three fighters in the finals, but both Richard Torrez Jr. (+ 91 kg), Davis (63 kg) and Duke Ragan (57 kg) could not win and finished as silver medalists.

Cuba ratified its all-time leadership in the Olympic Games thanks to 41 gold medals, 19 subtitles and 18 bronze medals and in Tokyo, it overtook the United Kingdom (2-2-2), Russia (1-1-4), Brazil (1-0-1) and Turkey (1-1-0), occupants in that order of the "top five".

Champion's corner

Under the leadership of Cuban boxers, five American nations celebrated golden prizes at the World Boxing Championship, which returned 43 years later to the city of Belgrade in Serbia.

In the Stark Arena, the largest of the Antilles presented eight men in the ring and through the fists of Julio Cesar La Cruz (92 kg), Andy Cruz (63.5 kg) and Yoenlis Hernandez (75 kg) reached 80 gold medals, to reaffirm itself as the country with the largest number of gold medals in competitions of this level.

La Cruz won his fifth world title in the Serbian capital, the lightweight Cruz won his third title and the Val Baker award for best fighter of the fight, while the debutant Hernandez celebrated the gold medal, to seal

a Cuban performance of five awards, added to the bronze medals of Osvel Caballero (57 kg) and Henrich Ruiz (86 kg).

The Cuban team, owner of the top for the 13th time in 21 editions, was escorted by the United States (2-2-0), Brazil (0-1-0), the Dominican Republic (0-0-1) and Trinidad and Tobago (0-0-1).

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