

Foreign coaches seduced by Cuban volleyball national team

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Argentine Jorge "el Negro" Elgueta

Havana, September 9 (RHC)-- After years away from the elite, the Cuban men's volleyball team has returned to the top level. The potential shown in the current season is captivating and coaches from several countries are showing interest in taking the reins of the team.

Jorge "El Negro" Elgueta, a versatile player from the golden age of Argentine volleyball and with more than a decade of experience as a coach, is one of those excited about the national team and has decided to knock on the doors of the Cuban Federation with a view to Paris-2024.

A member of the Argentine team in its golden era (90s and 2000s) in which figures like Hugo Conte and

Marcos Milinkovic shone, "El Negro" Elgueta also played as a player in countries like Italy and Brazil, and as a coach he has been in six countries.

In a dialogue with Radio Habana Cuba he was impressed by the potential he appreciates in the Cuban national team.

"I believe that today they have tremendous physical potential, a diamond that must be exploited. We are talking about a historic world power," he recalled.

"I was watching the World Cup matches and I know most of the players because before making the quality leap (to Europe), they played in Argentina, like Jesús Herrera, Osniel Mergarejo and Liván Osoria," recalled Elgueta (52), a champion as a coach in the leagues of Greece and Bahrain, and runner-up in Argentina's A-1 with the San Juan club in 2014.

He added that coaching the Cuban national team "would be a source of pride and a great yearning and considered he felt "qualified and eager, but that has to be decided by the Cuban Federation".

- What is your opinion about the performance of the Cuban team in the World Cup and specifically what would your project consist of if you were to be heard?

"In the World Cup I think two fundamental things have been lacking, first in the tactical part of the team and then in confidence," he opined and made it clear that "we are not talking about a physical issue."

"The boys are learning to play tactically, especially those who have the possibility of playing in Europe. There are different ways of playing volleyball, each team has its strategy. Cuban players have immense potential, but it is important to refresh the mentality, the wisdom, with a change of mentality in the sporting and human sense, because having a coach from another country means another responsibility," he argued.

"I think we have to work a lot, not because they don't know how to play volleyball, because they know how to play very well..., but we have to give them a different seasoning, a different air. There are things to improve. In today's volleyball you need data volleyball, you have to have statistics, know the numbers strategically, how we are going to play, who are the players to block, where we are going to attack, what is the weakness of the opponent. All that helps a lot in the tactical and strategic issue," he explained.

"I am in conditions to help the national team, to be part of this Olympic cycle and reach a medal as it has been achieved many years ago. Cuba has the assistants that can be added," he said, hinting that if his offer is approved as part of his project, he would also collaborate in the development of Cuban coaches.

- According to what you saw at the World Cup, what aspects caught your attention the most and do you consider that with the human material you see, do you think the team has the potential for a great result in Paris-2024?

"Undoubtedly. First of all, we have to lower the margin of error, which is very large. They have an admirable potential in aggressiveness, they have always had it, and I think that by ordering 2 or 3 things they can get great results. I am convinced that they have all the necessary weapons to achieve great results", he concluded.

In addition to the Argentinean, Radio Habana Cuba learned that coaches from Russia and Australia are also interested in coaching the Cuban team.

In the 1960s, strategists from the former European socialist camp helped Cuban volleyball, then many Cubans have coached in various countries around the world and several nations, even powers, sometimes appeal to foreign coaches.

Before the World Cup, the Cuban national team won three tournaments undefeated, including the South Korea Challenger, which gave it a ticket to the 2023 Nations League (VNL). In the World Cup, they defeated Qatar (3-1) and lost in a hard-fought match against Japan (1-3), Brazil (2-3) and Italy (1-3), the last two included among the big four.

Elgueta said goodbye with a greeting to the Cuban people and hoped to be able to collaborate with the men's volleyball team, perhaps the only team on the island with the potential to qualify for the Paris-2024 Olympic Games.

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