

Two Cuban triple jumpers on the podium at the Budapest World Championships

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Budapest, August 22 (Jit).- Triplists Lázaro Martínez and Cristian Nápoles placed Cuba among the medal nations at the XIX World Championships in Athletics 2023, thanks to their silver and bronze jumps, respectively.

After the drought in Oregon 2022, expectations revolved around their performances at the Hungarian National Athletics Center stadium.

It could be the first big moment for the Island's delegation, so many ended up satisfied with Lázaro's subtitle (17.41 meters) and Cristian's third place (17.40), who came close to taking the top spots on the podium.

Lázaro overcame the discomfort, forgot that one of his ankles was bad and set his best time on the second attempt. He made it clear that his plans were to overcome the image left in the previous call, when he went blank.

Shortly after, his teammate Napoles also surpassed 17 meters (17.02) and the dream began to take on the appearance of certainty. The best was yet to come, or at least that's what many of us wanted to think, including the jumper himself, euphoric when he learned that he had significantly improved his personal best. The medals began to seem like a matter of time.

The story could have been perfect, but the experienced Burkinabe Hugues Fabrice Zango was also looking for redemption. He flew with solvency after the third impulse to 17.64 meters, which this time opened the doors to glory.

The Cubans bet on the epic, but it did not happen. However, they reaffirmed that the tradition in this specialty remains intact and its condition as the most awarded for Cuba in these competitions is not in danger.

"My only concern was to focus on the competition to get the result and I achieved it," said Lazaro, the only Cuban with medals in world events in all categories, from cadet to seniors, including indoor events.

"I have to thank my doctor and my coach. We know how hard we have worked for this moment," confessed the 25-year-old Guantanamo, who also holds the world indoor title in Belgrade 2022.

For Cristian, the night also had vindictory overtones. He advanced that he wanted to improve on his fourth place from London 2017 and he delivered, despite the fact that his last few seasons had not been his best.

"I always followed the instructions of my dad, who is my coach. Thanks to him I get this result. After the foul on the first jump he told me that we had to score, that the medal was there and we could," he said, still excited.

His previous personal best of 17.38 meters had not been moved since the Doha 2019 edition, when he finished in fifth place.

A detail for history: the second time that Cubans have won a pair of prizes in the triple jump at an outdoor world championship. It had happened in Athens 1997, when Yoelbi Quesada -now the architect of Lázaro's result- won and Aliecer Urrutia finished in bronze.

Another brushstroke, but a sad one: one of the favorites, the young Jamaican leader of the season (17.87), Jaydon Hibbert, was injured in his first attempt. He had dominated the qualifying round (17.70) by a wide margin, but had to withdraw from the competition, a moment no athlete wants to experience.

NO PROGRESS ON THE TRACK

The other Cuban performances on Monday had as protagonists Roxana Gómez and Zurian Hechevarría, the first in pursuit of the 400 meters final and the other to overcome the first cut in the same distance, but with hurdles.

Neither achieved their goal. Roxana came in third in her semifinal with a time of 51.07 seconds, far from what was needed to get into the medal discussion.

Zurian did not have a good race either, as evidenced by her time of 56.43 seconds. He also said goodbye to the competition.

RECORDS TO END THE DAY

The Swedish discus athlete Daniel Sthl and the American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson were in charge of closing the day with records for these championships.

Sthal returned to the top step of the podium, where he had been at Doha 2019. He did it with a shot of 71.46 meters, enough to snatch the title from Slovenia's Kristjan Ceh (70.02), who had reigned in Oregon 2022.

Richardson, who came very close to the last 100m race, did not make those who saw her as the only one capable of breaking the Jamaican domination look bad.

At 23 years of age, not only can she show the crown, but her victory left a legend like Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce without her longed-for sixth scepter. It all happened in 10.65 seconds, the record of the event at least until the next edition.

Fraser, stripped of the previous record, came in third with 10.77 seconds, behind Shericka Jackson (10.72), which left Jamaica the consolation of doubling on the podium.

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