

Cuban volleyball reaffirms Olympic dream after lucid first week in VNL

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Havana, May 27 (RHC) - The Cuban men's volleyball team added three wins, climbed to ninth place in the world and reaffirmed its Olympic dream, after a prominent first week of the National Volleyball League (VNL).

With a solid performance as a team, especially in blocking, defense and attack, and guided by their stars Robertlandy Simón, Marlon Yant, Miguel Angel López and Javier Concepción, the Cubans beat Germany, Brazil and Iran (3-1), and They only lost to Japan (2-3).

In this way, they substantially increased their score in the world ranking, now having an advantage of more than 22 points over Serbia, their bitterest rival in the fight to be in Paris.

The Cubans now have 261.17 points and climbed from eleventh to ninth place, the last step that gives access to the Parisian Olympic event.

Now Serbia is eleventh (238.51) and the other strong candidate to battle for the last spot, the Netherlands, appears in 13th place, with 222.14).

In individual statistics, Javier Concepción, leader in blocks (14) and Simón (12), and Miguel Angel López and Marlon Yant stand out, both in the "top five" of top scorers, with 71 and 70 points, respectively.

An aspect that has surprised in Jesús Cruz's squad is the field defense, with three men among the 10 best – Yant (31 hits), Yonder García (30) and López (27), according to the specialized portal CubanSp1ke.

So far seven teams have already been secured in the men's volleyball for Paris: Poland, the United States, Japan, Brazil, Germany, Canada and the host France, and of the five remaining tickets, one will be for the best African team in the world ranking. , currently Egypt (19th place).

The remaining four spots will be decided by placement on the world list, after the end of the third week of the VNL.

Those with the best chance of taking those places are the world champion Italy (second with 361.86), Slovenia (fifth with 331.50) and Argentina (eighth 308.13).

After their participation in Rio de Janeiro, the Cubans will return to the island and travel days later to Ottawa (Canada), where they will face Canada (June 4), the Netherlands (6), Italy (7) in the second week of the VNL.) and France (8).

They will close the preliminary round in Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital, where they will compete against Serbia (June 19), Slovenia (20), Bulgaria (21) and Poland (23).

The best eight from the group round will clash in the quarterfinals (June 27 and 28), while the semifinals will be played on the 29th and the final on the 30th in Lods, Poland.

The standings left Germany in first place after the first week (4-0), followed by Cuba, the Olympic champion France, Poland and Japan, tied 3-1.

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