
Barranquilla 2018: The Power of Cuba Grows Difficult

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Cuba will try to keep the Center-Caribbean hegemony that holds since Panama 1970 in Barranquilla 2018, the path is very complicated and the drive of countries like the host country Colombia and Mexico.

Almost after four years since Veracruz 2014 is the most recent experience. Many will remember that the struggle in the medals board between Cuba and the host country was neck-to-neck, defined with a spectacular closing by the athletics (23-15-8) that launched Cuba to the top of the medals board retaining the condition of kings in the global board (123-66-65). Mexico (115-106-111), Colombia (70-75-78) and Venezuela (56-79-110) came next. Mexicans fixed a chronogram, including a few sports like squash to their advantage, which doesn't mean they have had boost in quality in the last years in several sports. Therefore the open struggle with Cubans.

Is no secret the fact that sports have experienced a sudden development after the Olympic Games of Barcelona 1992. Several variables have helped: limitless merchandizing, meteoric ascent of sport shows as the stage of a very profitable industry in the rising, nationalization of sportsmen and talent drain for more profitable horizons...

The point is our athletes are not immune to all that. I recall the fencer Taimí Chappé and the handball player Rolando Urios, two examples that began the drain in the early 90's of the last century.

Back to the Center-American and the Caribbean Games, also keeping in mind the shortage of resources to sustain a sport infrastructure. Comparable to that of first-world countries, the idea here is to claw to what has been conquered until now, even when the qualitative panorama is not as promising as 25 years ago.

Many nations in the area and others around the world have understood that sports and its growth are fertile grounds for development, while it reflects on social life. It's exactly for that reason they have poured so much interest and budget into this activity even at unsuspected levels.

Colombia is a good example. In the last decade has experienced breakthroughs in both sport infrastructure and

facilities, as results, majorly supported by the knowledge of other countries. Weightlifting, athletics, judo, cycling, are among the sports with greater progress, and keeping in the horizon the Games of Barranquilla August 3-19, 2018, with an estimated attendance 5 854 athletes will struggle in 36 sports representing 37 countries.

We are talking about the condition of Colombians as host country to register in all sports in competition, even those where they are not strong. Just as Mexicans did four years ago. Of course from my perspective right now Mexico is still a contestant to beware more than Venezuela.

Mathematically the more medals are distributed among those Center-Caribbean nations, next to Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and many other solo sportsmen from other countries, fewer will be the medals Cuban will win.

In Veracruz 19 countries won at least one gold medal and maybe after 11 months that same figure or more win a gold medal in Barranquilla.

What we have tried to explain in this column is that every new edition of world or multiple events regardless its reach it will contain a greater degree of complexity for our teams. Barranquilla will be a test of considerable rigor, with the pressure of Colombians and Mexicans as tough rivals. Let's trust we can keep the first position on the medal board, with athletics, judo, boxing, wrestling, rowing, canoeing, weightlifting, cycling, artistic gymnastics, again as main events.

All doubts will be cleared in less than six months and reality will be known, as part of the current Olympic cycle that will end in the Olympic games of Tokyo 2020.

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