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Victor Lopez: "Cuba is paramount in the development of NACAC and track and field"

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Puerto Rican Victor Lopez heads the North America, Central America and Caribbean Athletic Association since 2013. His management will end in 2019. He agreed to talk to CubaSi:

### **Why Cuba and specially Marabana for this competition?**

First of all, I would like to thank Marabana's Organizing Committee and the Cuban Athletic Federation for allowing us to add this competition to this race.

According to an IAAF order — since Sebastian Coe assumed responsibility—, it is all about inserting street races to those already established all over the world to draw the public's attention and encourage young people, as they see elite athletes running alongside them. I believe this first edition of NACAC marathon has been a resounding success.

### **How do you see the area within the current world athletic panorama regarding future events?**

The NACAC senior is a very important event and will be held in Toronto in August 10-12. The European and African championships will take place the same week.

We hope the main stars can participate as Canada, U.S., and Cuba confirmed their attendance. Can you imagine the quality of this event with all the stars dispersed all over the world?

### **What's your view on the track and field in the area and your assessment of 2017?**

The area is doing fine. We are having prominent results within IAAF and we hope to continue that way. The Pan American U20 was sensational: thirteen Pan American records and one world record. U17 athletes got awesome results in Nairobi; some of them were even elite marks.

I have two priorities before ending my term as head of NACAC in 2019. The first, it is my goal that all of our events can be televised worldwide as well as the Diamond League. In this regard, we gave shape to a collaborative agreement with one prestigious TV network.

The second is related to marketing. We are sponsored by Puma and Mondo. Inserting our best athletes in quality competitive scenarios leads necessarily to preserving traditions and keep growing.

### **Years of friendship with Cuba. How is your relation with Cuba both as president of NACAC and Puerto Rican?**

Cuba's helps has been outstanding and your stance in favor of the development of track and field and the rest of sports is unique. The delegate of Trinidad and Tobago told me about his idea of Cuba, a third-world country mired in poverty...

There are limitations as in every other nation of the world. But Cuba has been always willing to help and cooperate with its human resources in first place with any country.

All the islands know Cuba offers its helps unselfishly. That is why we found elite throwers in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and Grenada...

That is a perfect example of solidarity in sports, very similar to the one showed with those countries affected by hurricanes this season in Dominica and Puerto Rico.

We have not recovered yet and two months have already passed. I am personally grateful with this country and its people. And as the Lola Rodriguez Tio's poem reads: we are always the two wings of the same bird.

To highlight NACAC growing power in track and field, the region won 13 gold medals, 14 silver medals, and 15 bronze medals in IAAF World Championship London 2017.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Diaz / CubaSi Translation Staff**

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