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**Cuban Boxing: Fists, Strengths, and Tokyo's Cruel Stage**

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Cuban boxing will have in the Tokyo Olympic Games, one of the cruelest tournaments ever in history. This prediction can be verified from the qualifying tournament with venue in Buenos Aires (March 26 to April 3).

As it happens the boxing level in the continent has grown a lot, and there's also the dormant possibility that some countries can reach an agreement with several of their professional boxers and have them fight, as part of a competition granting 33 visas for men (five in 52, 57 and 63 kg; four in 69, 75, and 81; and three in 91 and over 91 kg), as part of the continental competitions.

If our eight boxers can't win their access there, there will be one last option at world level, scheduled for May and only 16 places to fulfill at the rate of two in each category.

With all and this panorama, Alberto Puig de la Barca, president of the Cuban Boxing Federation said that the main purpose in the road to the Olympic Games is that our eight athletes win their ticket in the Argentine capital ...

“A very detailed participation has been designed with goal of achieving our objectives. There is a very favorable atmosphere and work capacity among the shortlisted team and they have attained good results in the competitions held here with the Uzbekistan team, and more recently in the academy installed by the International Association in the Kazakh city of Almaty.

There, the nine attending boxers had the chance of sparring and training with the Hungarian

and Japanese teams, and more than 30 members of the local elite, including several world medalists.

By the way, the rest of candidates for the pre-Olympic kept training hard at the National School, where this Thursday will take place control fights prior the definition of the eight boxers.

"We must start from the idea that we will initially arrive in Tokyo with two less chances, since there will be eight categories for men instead of ten, in addition to five women categories, another turndown.

I can tell you in advance that for Paris 2024 it's expected the same number of men and women divisions.

There is no stress regarding the qualifier. It's a strength to have several athletes in different categories with possibilities, the result of a great internal rivalry between first and second ranked athletes for years.

That demands to always give the extra for those considered the main figures of each weight. In fact, in the recently finished Playa Girón competition, the event with the highest technical and logistic level in recent years, all the finals were among the first and second ranked figures in the country. Everything as expected".

### **Taking a Closer Look**

Entering more precise projections on who could represent us, the official said that in 52 kg the balance is tilted in favor of Damián Arce (52 kg) before the winner in the World Competition and the Playa Giron tournament Yosbany Veitía. Arce is vigorous and engages quickly, he needs to work on his defense, in addition Veitía engaged in indiscipline, and has shown instability in his most recent international participations.

Although he repeated that the decision to prioritize those in best shape applies to all weight categories.

In fact, similar situations appear in the 57 kg (Osviel Caballero and Lázaro Álvarez), and in the 69 (Roniel Iglesias and Kevin Brown), on the other hand with a smoother path are Andy Cruz (63), Yoennis Hernández (75) , the raising Arlen López (81) and Julio César La Cruz (91), closing the young Dainier Peró (+91).

The team will have a ten-day training based in Germany, starting on February 9<sup>th</sup>, and he advanced that they will have other international stops, including altitude training. That could probably be in Japan, to work on the jetlag, climate and food on Japanese grounds.

Regarding women's boxing, Puig said that feasibility studies and meetings continue with the highest officials of the Women Organization in Cuba. "Positive steps have been taken. When a consensus is reached, a strategy for its further development will begin. The spirituality of the Cuban woman is very favorable for her to succeed in combat sports and historically this has been proven in competitions at any level. "

A look at the Cuban boxing in the Olympic Games show that the well-known spearhead team is second in the medal list with a record of 37 gold, 19 silvers and 17 bronzes, only surpassed by the United States (50-24-40).

