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### World Cup Qualifiers: Brazil Better Without Vinicius?

By: Lemay Padrón Oliveros / Special for CubaSi  
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The outlook for Brazil looked very discouraging before this week's double date in the regional qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup, because it could not count on the injured Vinicius Jr., but for the first time since the beginning of this process, back in September last year, it added six points in the same window.

The question that heads this work then goes around the heads of some, but it's really inconceivable that a team can play better without the presence of the probable Ballon D'Or of the year. Coach Dorival Junior for the first time breathes at ease and has the chance to turn the Seleção around, which has reached 16 points and tied with Uruguay in third place.

The five-time world champion faced the bottom team Peru and Chile, but the level shown so far by the Scratch was so low that even those opponents posed some difficulty for them.

On the other hand, Argentina confirmed its comfortable lead with 22 points, after tying with Venezuela and beating Bolivia, which was able to take advantage of the altitude at El Alto against Colombia, but not against Argentina, although for the moment it is still in the race for the World Cup.

The return of star Lionel Messi resulted in a hat-trick against the Bolivians, one of his favorite victims of all time, and between the three posts Geronimo Rulli fulfilled the purpose of increasing the absence of Emiliano Martínez, suspended for two games for assaulting a cameraman in Barranquilla in the previous match.

Colombia remains solid in second place with 19 points, and with the help of "The Reborn" James Rodriguez, they beat Chile to recover from the defeat in Chilean lands.

In the case of La Roja de América, the dismissal of Argentine coach Ricardo Gareca is a fact, as he cannot find the key to replace the Golden Generation and has only one victory in 10 appearances, although it's speculated that they cannot fire him because there's no money to pay for the indomitability this would bring.

His compatriot Marcelo Bielsa is also in a slump, as he finished the double date with a defeat against bottom-placed Peru and a draw at home against Ecuador, which makes one think of the effect of those criticisms of him that we mentioned earlier from members of the Celeste team. Although he remained third, between now and next month there must be a rapprochement between the coach and the players, or this adventure will end badly.

Paraguay and Ecuador are still quiet in the fight for direct tickets with 13 points each, after tying each other, and also winning the second match, although Bolivia (12) and Venezuela (11), the other teams with real chances of accessing the next world competition, are still very close.

In reality, mathematics does not rule out anyone, because there are still 24 points at stake, but Chileans and Peruvians would have to make a radical change.

**Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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