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## The Catastrophe of Cuban Soccer

By: Lemay Padrón Oliveros / Special for CubaSi  
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A draw was all they needed. Playing at home! Against a team that was, in theory, inferior in quality to ours. Honestly, I think what happened this Tuesday in Santiago de Cuba has made Cuban soccer hit rock bottom.

Lack of pressure on opponents, zero ambition, defensive substitutions, a lack of harmony between the midfield and the forward line, a disastrous final pass, and the traditional defensive lapses have ruined our national team.

The Cuban Football Association's (AFC) decision to retain Yunielys Castillo despite his poor performance doomed our country to another standstill, facing the most difficult World Cup qualifiers in the last 40 years.

It could have been even worse, as Bermuda hit the post and had two more counterattacks late in the match that could have made the situation even more humiliating.

After narrowly defeating Antigua and Barbuda as visitors last Friday, the Cuban national team only needed a draw in the final match to advance to the final phase of The North, Central America, and the Caribbean (CONCACAF) headed to the tournament co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico in 2026.

We know we were going to be the uninvited guests at that stage, but not even reaching that moment is truly embarrassing, when everything was in our favor.

But to be honest, it's not surprising either, because after the resounding defeats against Trinidad and Tobago in the Nations League that lowered our standing, we thought there would be a change in the squad's leadership, and life went on as usual.

After two years with the senior team, this coaching staff had a poor record of three wins, five draws, and seven losses in 15 matches.

Even with the water up to its neck, it wasn't until the 86th minute that Maikel Reyes, our team's iconic striker,

entered the field, with practically no time to fight for a draw that would only mask the disastrous management of the Caribbean team.

Instead of going out in search of a second goal, the Caribbean Lions dropped their lines and gave the ball to their opponents, who handled it more effectively in much less possession.

The dream turned into a nightmare because, among other things, this team doesn't know how to play anything other than defense, and they've even done so poorly in recent official matches, conceding 13 goals in their last seven matches.

The only redeeming feature is the newly incorporated players, who showed commitment and dedication despite sometimes lacking effectiveness. However, to lead them properly, greater wisdom is needed on the bench.

The "legionaries" need to feel that wearing the Cuban jersey is worth the long journey, not that they're coming to make a fool of themselves, and for that, their image must be greatly improved.

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

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