
USA wins Gold at NORCECA U-20 Women's Continental Championship

14/07/2014



United States battled Cuba with a 3-0 (25-15, 25-22, 25-16) victory in the Gold Medal match of the Women's U-20 NORCECA Continental Championship at Teodoro Palacios Flores in Guatemala City on Sunday.

United States and Cuba clash amused with both fighting strong from start to finish; it seemed if the pressure of already earning the bid to next year's FIVB World Championship unleashed USA's best offensive and defensive tactics. USA achieved their sixth NORCECA title unbeaten and without dropping a set.

United States showed team effort while Cuba based their campaign on Melissa Vargas' attacks. USA managed to defeat Cuba with a 32-26 margin in kills; they also led with a wide advantage in the blocking category by 14-7 as well as in serves by 8-2. USA managed fewer unforced errors (18-21) than Cuba.

USA was led by middle blocker Rhamat Alhassan who notched 15 points, 4 blocks and 2 aces included; opposite Hayley Hodson also combined efforts to the win with 14 points. Cuba's outside hitter Melissa Vargas topped with 12 points, along with outside hitter Diaris Perez with 11 points.

"It feels good to win the gold and to qualify to the world championship undefeated and without dropping a set as a reward for playing hard. We'll now return to play for our own clubs and continue in our individual development as players" said USA's captain Hayley Hodson.

Cuba's captain Carmela Massip, always with a smile and high attitude said "my team played without the pressure of qualifying to the world championship, it would have been good to win the tournament but USA plays really hard. I always motivate my teammates but the real leader in our team is our libero, Dayessi Luis".

USA's coach Thomas Hogan expressed that this young Cuban squad reminds him Cuba's national team "Morenas del Caribe", "they have a bright future ahead; Melissa Vargas is a combination of Mireya Ruiz and Nancy Carrillo, she plays unbelievably well". Hogan also praised Guatemala's organizing efforts, "I've been to many tournaments and this competition was one of the best".

Cuban coach Tomas Fernandez said "the players had difficulties to keep their concentration because we have already reached our goal. I am proud of my team because they did a spectacular effort beating Dominican Republic, which was expected to play the Gold Medal Match. Technically speaking, USA is much more superior to ours and individually their players have great physical attributes".
