Yaimé Pérez and Andy Cruz: At the top of Cuba sports

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A twelve-month race. Holding up efforts to the end and translate them in positive results, marks, times, fights, hooks, and uppercut that make them shine bright over the rest. For Yaimé Pérez and Andy Cruz, 2018 started as any other important year, halfway to Tokyo 2020.

However, both have deserved the award to the best athletes in Cuba after taking into account more than 221 criteria managed by a digital platform.

Let’s get into the details of what these athletes did to achieve such important award as this is the first time both win it.

Andy Cruz was rookie of the year in 2017.

Back in business, *El Matador* (The Killer), as Andy Cruz (23, Matanzas) is also known, won all of his combats this year. He won the Central American and the Caribbean Games held in Barranquilla. He also won the gold medal in the World Series of Boxing. In this competition, he extended his winning streak to 16 after his debut in 2015 against Mexican boxer Brian González.

He tops AIBA 64kg division with 1,700 points ahead of Uzbek Ikboljon Kholdarov

and Fazliddin Gaibnazarov (1,300, each). What's more, he also won the gold medal in the Chemistry Cup in Halle.

Yaimé and a well-deserved recognition

It was all a matter of psychology. A successful year to make her believe and trust herself. She is one of the best discus throwers in the world. She has been in the discus throw elite for years now. Nonetheless, Yaimé had not had any relevant results until this season.

But everything changed in 2018. Early in the season she had an outstanding 67.82m worth of the third best throw of the year. She won in the Continental Cup, the Central American and the Caribbean Games and the NACAC Championship. She was the runner-up in the Diamond League and the IAAF World Challenge.

On August 31, she beat once again sensational Croatian Sandra Perkovic with 65,00m in the Diamond League of Brussels.

That victory certainly instilled a lot of confidence within her. She has everything to become of the best Cuban discus throwers ever. In fact, she is today the best in Cuba along with teammate Denia Caballero.

Her technique may see some improvements yet. If she can combine some of these improvements with her physical strength, she will be feared even more.

Other outstanding athletes

Cruz and Pérez were not the only athletes who excelled this year. Due to their respective performances, hockey player Sunaylis Nikle and baseball player Alfredo Despaigne were chosen best individual athletes in team sports while Cuba's *Domadores* won the team Award, especially after winning its third crown in World Series.

Wrestling was the best individual sports especially after winning a gold medal and 4 bronze medals in the World Championship. 13 gold medals were achieved in Barranquilla and 10 in Peru´s Pan American tournament.

Meanwhile, field hockey deserved the best prize in team sports after winning in men and women categories in the Central American and the Caribbean Games.

Rowers Serguey Torres and Fernando Dayán won in the non-individual category. Both earned the silver medal in the C-2 1000m category at the World Championship as well as posting excellent results in different stages of World Cups.

It is debatable to me the selection of classical wrestler Luis Alberto Orta as Rookie of the Year. Although it is true that he has won titles in Continental tournaments.

In Cuba´s top-10 athletes we can find names like Cyclists Arlenis Sierra and Marlies Mejías; boxer Julio Cesar La Cruz; gymnast Manrique Larduet; judokas Idalys Ortiz and Iván Silva, ling jumper Juan Miguel Echeverría, wrestlers Yowlys Bonne and Lienna de la Caridad Montero; and heptathlete Yorgeris Rodríguez.

In the youth category, triple jumper Yordan Díaz and wrestler Milaymis de la Caridad Martín won the main awards.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff