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## Judo taking the first steps to Barranquilla 2018

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The longest journey starts with the first step. So it reads an old Chinese saying and Cuban judo will put it into practice in the upcoming days.

The qualifying tournament to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Central American and the Caribbean Games Barranquilla 2018 will be held in the Dominican Republic. The men's and women's Cuban team will try hard to win all tickets.

There should not be any obstacle for Cuban athletes to end in the top-5 given Cuba's quality in the sport. Nonetheless, the participation is mandatory.

It is no secret that judo is one of those sports disciplines with pivotal responsibility—we are referring to Cuba's performance as a whole. But we essentially need to take the first step and it means full-squad qualification.

However, it will be tough to match Veracruz 2014 results where Cuba got 13 gold medals, 4 silver medals, and 1 bronze medal, if we bear in mind the results of men and women.

By that time, Cuba only missed one gold medal among women. Nowadays, Colombian Yuri Alvear and Puerto Rican Maria Perez —World Championship runner-up— are two rising stars. Luckily for Cuba, both compete in the same division (70 kg).

Perhaps one of them changes the division next year and it would certainly make things worse.

It is well-known that Cuban teams have been rejuvenated and that was one of the reasons why Cuba performed poorly at the IJF World Champion held in Budapest. Less than 10 months away from the Central American and the Caribbean Games, young athletes know time is paramount.

There is plenty of time and we must trust the technical staff as they are well-aware of the importance of judo for Cuban delegation to retain the crown in Barranquilla 2018.

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