
Boxing: Once Again the Everlasting Spark of Cuban Sports

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Boxing, with five gold medals and two more in the World Championship of Hamburg, ran off as the best individual Cuban sport in 2017. Julio Cesar La Cruz commanded the team with his fourth medals in a row.

He makes his way with his fists. That has been an unquestionable foreign principle of Cuban boxing since the 70's of the last century, when Orlando Martínez (48 kg), Emilio Correa (67) and Teófilo Stevenson (+81) had a golden debut in the Olympic Games on September 10th, 1972 in Munich.

Up until today our boxing school has established a universal feud, challenging the rest of the powers in boxing. Only in the Olympic Games we add 37 golden, 19 silver and 17 bronze medals, while in world championships, the score soars up to (76-34-25).

The Cuban team kept this year in Hamburg (five golden and two silver medals) the hegemony reclaimed in Doha, Qatar 2015. Those, in fact, were the only golden medals of our sport movement in World Championships of 2017, together with equal amount of silver and bronze medals.

Running a preliminary analysis is more than fair that our boxing team had achieved the position as best individual sport, as well as the Domadores had deserved the distinction among the teams.

The Domadores team was runner-up on the VII World Championship. I personally still have a bitter taste as for the yield they showed. I remember waking up at 5:00 a.m. like thousands of other Cubans to enjoy the final match day. We were almost caressing victory, after the smashing start, but it faded little by little, until the team broke down on the second half of the tournament.

Anyway as consolation remains the fact of being the most winning team in the competition, winning 43 out of 61 fights.

On top of that another solid argument is that we have located five of our boxers in the first or second position in the AIBA World Ranking, other two are third and one of them is fourth on a total of ten divisions existing at present. Likewise, to this side of the Atlantic, they made it clear who's in charge, with eight gold medals in the continental competition, besides two runner-up positions.

Any other country of the world with similar successful record in boxing would be brimming with joy. In our case, although we end the year on the ring with Playa de Girón Tournament and great satisfaction, the role of everlasting spark role of boxing always raises a notch. The always demanding boxing fans are at times unaware of all the efforts and variables that must come together to win medals on the elite.

The "crossroad" of Two Hellish Cruz

Julio Cesar la Cruz, and Andy Cruz. Just mentioning these two names now inspires respect and care in any rival. From the corner, even when they don't show it, the coaches of the opponents are almost sure their pupils will enter a lost battle against the "Cruzifiers" from Cuba.

Julio Cesar won the fourth gold medal in world championships in a row. Very few boxers in history have accomplished such deed. With a style that has won the nickname of "The shadow", for his cat-like speed to get close, punch and avoid the blows of his rivals, dancing on the ring, waving his torso, La Cruz had a terrific year winning 12 out of his 13 combats.

By the way, in the final match in Hamburg, as mimicking what happened in Qatar in 2015, he bent the knees of the Irish Joe Ward again.

Although his fighting style still doesn't convince some fans, there's no doubt he has an elevated degree of effectiveness. Actually winning his fourth medal in a row won him the best individual sportsman of the year.

Andy Cruz, is assessed as one of the best boxers pound by pound today, I totally agree. Chosen as the most outstanding boxer in the World Championship of Hamburg, the boy from Matanzas won over the 18 opponents he faced in 2017, six of them in an impeccable way in the VII World Championship of Boxing.

To his first world medal he added the Pan-American title, therefore he appears on the second position of the world ranking in the 64 kg. That is why he has been chosen as Rookie of the year, when he wore the Cuban color he had already won the gold medal in 56 kg in the Pan-American of Toronto.

If not for the fourth medal of La Cruz, to me Andy would have won the condition as best individual athlete of the year. Just watching each of his matches regardless the opponent to certify that we are witnessing one of those boxers that exhibit the so-called total boxing: good domain of distances, effectiveness with his punches, either jab, swing, uppercut... speed, excellent defense and dodging.

It's a feast to the eye when he is boxing, besides the sensation of victory almost 100% he inspires. I recall Stevenson, Ariel Hernández, Héctor Vinent, Mario Kindelán, Guillermo Rigondeaux, and other historical boxers along four decades of splendor.

Undoubtedly a pleasant crossroad where these two boxers are taking us. No wonder five out of the best ten athletes this year belong to this sport. They are Jhoannys Argilagos (49 kg), Yosbany Veitía (52), Lázaro Álvarez (60), Roniel Iglesias (69) and Erislandy Savón.

I'd like to finish with statistical fact from the World Championship of Hamburg: ours boxers won in 27 fights and only lost four. That without taking a representative in the + 91 kg. We must conclude that we are strong with these credentials.
