

Cuba opens with thrilling victory

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Canada almost spoiled Robertlandy Simon's return to competition with the Cuban National Team, but Cuba pulled off the five-set (25-19, 19-25, 25-17, 22-25, 15-11) victory at the NORCECA Champions Cup at the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Training Center.

Canada led Cuba in attacks (54-51) and blocks (13-7). But Cuba's serving was dominant and it led in aces (9-2). Cuba also scored 39 points off Canada's errors while committing 28.

Canada's Blake Scheerhoorn led all scorers with 17 points on 15 attacks and two blocks. Cuba's Marlon Yang led his team with 15 points on 12 attacks and three aces.

Simon, who left the Cuban National Team to play professionally, scored 10 points on eight attacks and two blocks.

Cuba Captain Livan Osoria: "We had a little bit of a slow start, but at the end of the day, we got it. We're excited to be here."

Cuba Coach Nicolas Vives: "Canada is a great team, but my guys played great and did everything they could. I'm proud of them."

On the fifth set

"They're really young players and needed a little bit of help, but they were ready to go come the end of the game. They knew what they were doing at that point. I trust them and let them

know I trust them. That's a big part of it."

Canada Captain Danny Demyanenko: "It took a little bit of time for both teams to get going. The first couple sets were one team having a really good set while the other one struggled, and then it would flip flop. Toward the end down the stretch, it was getting really tight, the fourth and the fifth sets were very tight. Unfortunately, we came out on the losing end of that battle to a very good Cuban team. We're excited that we battled this hard and look forward to what else is going to come in this tournament."

Canada Coach Ryan Marsden: "It's obviously disappointing. Our guys battled as hard as they could. When it looked like we were down and out in game four, they came from nowhere. Our biggest Achilles heel today was just missing serves. Our biggest strength was our block defense. When we miss our serve, we're not able to show that on a consistent basis. I'm really, really, really proud of our guys."

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