
Regarding Cuba's Performance in the Pan American Games

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I'm the first who would have wanted our Pan-American sports delegation to achieve results like those that, until 2011, were common. I, who had my first approach to multidisciplinary events in Ponce 90, Havana 91, and Barcelona 92, from my young age assumed that being among the five best sports powers in the world was something normal. Over the years, evidently, many Cubans continue to take that as an absolute truth.

But also over the years one begins to understand how sport works, how it evolves into industry structures and how other variables, more linked to issues besides sports than sports itself, influence, with increasing weight, for a country to win a medal.

So I don't feel disappointed at all with the 30 gold medals in Santiago 2023, nor with the fifth place in the medal board. Sport is no stranger to the attacks Cuba has suffered, especially in economic matters. If until the beginning of the century we reigned in regional events, it was because we reaped the fruits of decades of very favorable conditions for the development of our sport.

But all that changed, for known reasons. And you have to be very narrow-minded not to understand that between the Berlin Wall and the strengthening of the Economic War against Cuba, it was going to impact our sports movement. I think it's redundant to talk about the talent theft, the escape of athletes, and Cubans competing for other countries.

That's why I admire our athletes, and it does not mean that I give up demanding more in results, and INDER in organization, design and competitive strategies; but win or lose, they are OUR athletes, the ones who represent us and raise the name of our country high.

Cuba achieves these results in unique and extraordinary conditions. None of the 40 countries that competed with Cuba (and even less the 4 that were ahead of us), suffer from a blockade that directly impacts sports (see the Report recently presented by Cuba, and supported by 187 countries).

Ahead of Cuba were the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Mexico, nations that surpass us in population and economy, both primary bases to be able to design a sports development strategy.

Behind were quite a few countries with those same characteristics, such as Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Peru. Not to brag, but we must put Cuba's 30 gold in its place, an undreamt-of figure for Uruguay and Panama—yes, the great Panama—which only reached two each; or Costa Rica and El Salvador, who only heard their anthem once. Yes, El Salvador that some outdated people have wanted to sell us as a development model to copy. I also add that no country had a better rate of gold medals per million inhabitants than Cuba.

With all these reasons, we have plenty of reasons to feel deeply proud of my country, of its athletes and that, despite all hardships we know well, efforts and resources that have allowed this result have been prioritized.

Another analysis I have not heard from any specialist has to do with the quality of Cuban medals. Notice how from the Central Americans to the Pan Americans, the alleged predominance of Mexico and Colombia over Cuba was reduced, and we even surpassed the latter. If we take the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games as a reference, we will see that both those mentioned, such as Brazil and Canada, fell behind Cuba.

Therefore, there's a variable at play that we could call the quality of medals and the sporting result, which shows that Cuban medals manage to prevail much more than those of all countries in the region (except the United States), when they transcend towards events of greater demand and quality. Giving a simple example: Cuba's Central American and Pan American medals and gold medals are achieved much more in the Olympics than those of Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and Colombia.

Because all of this, you have to be very anti-Cuban, very anti-patriotic and very sportingly ignorant, to try to detract from the result of our Pan-American delegation. To those who predicted a debacle, who were not able to enjoy the countless demonstrations of greatness of our athletes to the point of heart attack, those who want to talk about the failure of a social project based on absurd and subjective comparisons, it has hit them one again, shooting backfires, and I'm not referring to sports shooting.

Nor do I know that in any of the countries that were left behind Cuba, there was an attempt to generate such a catharsis of anti-patriotism and irrational hypercriticism that some wanted to validate here. Chile, with its 12 golds, for example, has achieved its best historical performance, and they are very happy.

So you, Cuban who reads this article, can be proud of our 30 gold medals. We are not less than anyone. Let that joy come, that Cuba is great and will continue to be so, despite hardships. Our sport showed that the motto of "More challenges, more commitment" was, above all, a commitment to the people. That greatly bothers those who love us poorly.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
