
Cuban Judo: Discreet Closing of a Good Year

By: Lemay Padrón Oliveros / Special for CubaSi
26/12/2023



Although the competitive closing of Cuban judo was very discreet (without medals with five representatives in the Tokyo Grand Slam), it can be said that it was a good year for this sport in Cuba.

Let's Start with the Most Recent.

The very strong annual event in the capital of Japan gathered Maylín del Toro (63 kilograms), Lianet Cardona (78), Orlando Polanco (66), Iván Silva (90) and Andy Granda (more than 100), the latter was the only one able to advance in the charts and was close to at least competing in the play-offs.

But we cannot let this closure cloud the work of our judokas throughout the year, where they were protagonists in both the Central American and Caribbean Games in San Salvador 2023 and the Pan American Games in Santiago de Chile 2023.

They arrived at the regional competition, held from June 23-July 8, with the pledge to equal or surpass what was attained in Barranquilla 2018, where eight gold medals were won. It was a huge challenge, but girls and boys combined to total nine gold medals, three silvers, and two bronze medals.

Before San Salvador they had a presence on the podiums at the Grand Prix and even Grand Slam tournaments, largely as a result of training bases carried out in France (women) and Hungary (men), but they came back empty handed in the World Championship in Doha (May 7-13).

If that performance in San Salvador was outstanding, much more so was that of the continental event, held on Chilean venue from October 20-November 5.

There the team arrived physically and psychologically weakened by desertions that took place just a few days before the event, which jeopardized the medal commitment of this discipline, and caused that in the mixed team competition all the duels would start with a defeat, not having a representative in the minor division among women.

In the previous event, Lima 2019, they had won first place in this sport, with five golds, two silvers and five bronzes, and now in the Chilean capital they finished with one extra gold (6-0-1) .

The climax was the team match competition against Brazil, which dominated the judo medal score (7-3-6). Despite starting with defeat, we reached the extra fight, spectacularly defined by a Granda who was still on fire despite having fought almost repeatedly for 12 minutes.

For 2024, the challenge is primarily in the Olympic classification, and with that objective the Cuban judokas must add points to seek the place through the world ranking route.

Some are well placed in their respective divisions, and in the case of those who don't achieve it through the world ranking list, they could achieve it through the continental ranking. But we will deal with that in more detail next time.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
