

Cuban boxer Claro the only light in Italy

By: Lemay Padrón Oliveros / Special for CubaSi

15/03/2024



The first world qualifying boxing tournament held in the Italian city of Busto Arsizio showed poor results for Cuban boxing athletes as Alejandro Claro's ticket (51 kg) for Paris 2024 was the only positive news.

The national champion was very good throughout the whole tournament, which he closed with a great win over Colombian Yuberjen Martinez, runner up in Rio de Janeiro 2016, and certainly one of the best in the division in the world.

However, that was actually the only smile of our delegation. The rest of the team returned home empty-handed.

Legnis Cala (57 kg) and Yakelín Estornell (66 kg) tried to make history as the first Cuban women to participate in Olympic Games. But it was known that such a goal was very tough to achieve because their opponents had more experience and quality.

However, I expected more from the others: Jorge Cuéllar (71 kg), Erislandy Álvarez (63.5 kg) and Fernando Arzola (92+ kg), especially from the latter two, medalists in the last World Championship held in Tashkent.

Since I could not watch the bouts, I cannot comment on what happened and I cannot speak about unfair calls, but I did read that in Erislandy's case, it was all about a cut in his eyebrow.

I say this because it is not the first time that we see him bleeding there, and since it is an area where a good part of the rivals' blows hit, it needs a good healing time so that it does not reopen in a demanding competition where you must fight almost every day.

Unlike professional boxing, in Olympic boxing this sort of injuries causes the fight to be stopped, which lead to the defeat of the injured boxer either in that bout or the next one.

That is why is concerning since healing time is precisely what the boxer, native from Cienfuegos, is not going to enjoy, since the three-time world champion Lázaro Álvarez is waiting for his call behind the scenes.

Both have showed shaky performances and the coaching staff will have to decide who to choose to represent that division in the upcoming qualifying tournament, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, May 23-June 3.

In Arzola's case, there was also a blood issue, but that of his rival this time. However, the final decision was unfavorable to him. It is fair to say that it was a tough opponent, and I strongly believe that he will achieve the goal next time up.

I do not think there will be many changes in the Flagship of Cuban sport for the Thai event; barely a change of Álvarez, if anything.

At the moment, continental kings Julio Cesar La Cruz and Arlen Lopez, Saidel Horta and now Alejandro Claro are the ones with the Olympic qualification guaranteed for Paris 2024 so far. In our continent, Brazil has already ten tickets out of thirteen if we take into account both sexes.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
