
World Wrestling Championships: Milaimys Carried the Flag!

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When analyzing the main hopes of the Cuban delegation at the World Wrestling Championships held in Zagreb, Croatia, expectations were centered on the Greco-Roman discipline, with women's freestyle aiming to make its own contribution following its excellent performance at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

In the end, however, it was the women who carried the flag for the Cuban team, securing the only medal: a bronze by Milaimys Marín, who repeated her third-place finish from Paris in the heavyweight division.

In Paris, only the American Kennedy Blades had stopped her at 76 kilograms, but this time Blades competed at 68. The one who cut her path to gold in Zagreb was Ecuador's Génesis Reasco, who went on to claim the title.

That bout could have gone either way, with Marín taking the lead in the first period before conceding in the second. Nonetheless, it was another outstanding performance by the Cuban, who defeated the rest of her rivals by technical superiority.

Close to the podium was Yaynelis Sanz (55 kg), two-time Pan American Junior Games champion, who after falling in preliminaries rebounded in the repechage before losing the bronze-medal match to Romania's Andrea Beatrice Ana.

Laura Herin (53 kg) was Cuba's other representative. She was eliminated in the round of 16 after a narrow defeat to Ecuador's Lucía Yépez, the weight class runner-up and long-time elite contender. In repechage, Sweden's Emma Jonna Denise Malmgren proved superior.

It was nonetheless an excellent showing for Cuba's women, who traveled to the Croatian capital without Paris silver medalist Yusneilys Guzmán, currently preparing for future competitions.

Pan American champion Arturo Silot (97 kg) delivered a solid performance, but as noted, this is the toughest division worldwide across all styles, and his podium chances were slim.

Falling short of expectations were Cuba's three Greco-Roman standouts—world medalists Luis Orta (67), Gabriel Rosillo (97), and Oscar Pino (130)—despite some questionable officiating that ultimately did not prove decisive.

Orta, seeded first in his division, was upset by Russia's Daniel Agaev after winning the initial set. A Cuban protest was unsuccessful, and later the European executed a move the Havana native could not counter, leaving him out of contention for bronze.

Rosillo suffered a similar fate in the quarterfinals against Belarusian Kiryl Maskevich, a multiple European medalist and 2021 world silver medalist at 87 kilos.

Far more unexpected was Pino's loss to Turkey's Muhammet Hamza Bakir, a substitute for the legendary Riza Kayaalp. Bakir, far from Kayaalp's level, failed even to pull the Cuban into the repechage.

It has been anything but a promising start to the new Olympic cycle for Cuban wrestling. The hope now is to return to the path of victory in the months ahead.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque / CubaSí Translation Staff
