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Athletic Letter

The morena from Pinar del Río. Symbol of Cuban volleyball

La morena pinareña. Símbolo del voleibol cubano

A morena pinareña. Símbolo do voleibol cubano

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Tradition and history has the sport of the high net on the Island, the beginning of volleyball in Cuba is indicated by historians from 1906, although in studies by Professor Carlos Reig Romero (museologist of the National Museum of Sport), publications appear where volleyball was already practiced since 1905. It was introduced by Mr. Augusto York Brook, sergeant of the American Army Signal Corps belonging to the American troops for their occupation in Cuba (2nd intervention), who began to introduce this sport among the soldiers as part of their physical preparation and recreation in Regiment No. 6, located in the then Columbia Camp, Mariano municipality, Havana province.



Women began to practice it in 1930 in the Medina sports club, in the municipality of Marianao and the first championship in Cuba, organized by Rafael Usatorres, began on June 1, 1938, in the grounds of the "Vitapán" biscuit store, with the participation of two teams. With the revolutionary triumph, the first official female participation in the IX Central American and Caribbean Games took place in Jamaica 62 with the fourth place. From this date the female practice of this discipline expanded to several territories of the country, developing mainly in Havana, different school and club championships; reaching to celebrate some international friendly tops, (García, T and Barrera, L.M., 2017).

As Moreno, O. (2010) refers, the province of Pinar del Río also had its opening in this sport, although no one has been able to pinpoint with certainty the exact date when volleyball was brought to the lowlands.

The first woman from Pinar del Río to join the national team was Zaida Valdes, original from Guanajay, which in the old territorial distribution belonged to Pinar del Río. It is not until the 80s that volleyball proliferated in the female branch in Pinar del Río, both school teams, youth and first category are imposed and managed to place themselves in the top places of volleyball in Cuba, (García, T and Barrera, L.M., 2017).

The incredible rise to the world level of Cuban women's volleyball is one of the most extraordinary events of the late twentieth century in Cuba. It denotes a real work of scientific-methodological preparation and application of a successful strategy that wisely integrated the demands of the international context with its own particularities; revealing an important factor of success not treated in depth where the accelerated development was focused:

"The projection of height". The process of formation and gestation of a style or philosophy of game had quite authentic particularities and demands. The system of sports preparation promoted a gradual improvement of a spectacular sports mastery, Núñez M. (2012).

Another important element for so many laurels is the formation of moral values that has a great importance for the development of personality, to ensure that athletes assume a concrete participation in the struggle that characterize the stage of building a new society, which guide their behavior and consequently determine their attitudes, their ways of acting. It has a significance as a driving force of behavior, as it provides guidance for personal and individual decision making, Meriño, Caballero and Rodríguez (2013).

For Portela, Y. (2020), volleyball is an excellent field of action for the promotion and development of social and personal values of children and young people. This sport for its different dynamics offers the possibility of generating situations and conditions of inclusion and education, as players must learn to make commitments, make decisions not only individually but collectively, to engage with their peers, with the process, with the teacher, with the conditions and learning situations that will recognize their different opportunities and what these offers them, in order to achieve a correct education within the process of social transformation.

The effect of what has been said so far can be found in the influence of The Spectacular Morenas of the Caribbean, who will live forever in the annals of volleyball and Olympic history.



Girls who place the volleyball of the end of the 20th century in Cuba in an event that has marked the identity of the nation, revealing itself as one of the most extraordinary and singular events that have occurred in national history. For Cuban women, it is a kind of vindication that appraises all the extraordinary work of the Revolution. From a sixth place finish in Kingston, Jamaica in the Central American Games in 1962, to winning the gold medal in three Olympic Games: Barcelona '92, Atlanta '96, Sydney 2000. Counting with the coach of the century and the volleyball player of the century, along with a team that reigned for a decade in all international competitions scheduled as referred by **Núñez M. (2012)**, in an interview with Eugenio George, technical director of the national team of the time.

As Marlenis Costa said:

"That team of The Morenas of the Caribbean I think it should be in the hearts of everyone who loves volleyball, the fans of this sport, but also in the whole world. We just want to be remembered as The Morenas of the Caribbean, as those great champions that we were"

There are many beautiful pages written by Cuban volleyball players throughout history, after the creation of the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER in Spanish) in 1961, so it is necessary to go to the historical memories to understand the significance of one of the Morenas of the Caribbean with Pinar del Río roots that has shown so much love, solidarity and dedication from the sporting, personal and professional field to her people.

Marlenis Costa Blanco is a Cuban sports personality, she was born on July 30, 1973 in Consolación del Sur, Pinar del Río, but her childhood was spent in the central Manuel Sanguily in La Palma, municipality of the same province, where she began all her struggle to get to volleyball. Her raw work begins in the hands of her uncles Javier and Jesus, participating in municipal and provincial events, until 1983 when she enters the School of Sports Initiation (EIDE in Spanish) Ormani Arenado in the capital of Pinar del Río, it should be noted that from the beginning she was only captivated by volleyball, although she liked the practice of others.

Coming from a family of great athletes, starting with her grandfather, to finish with uncles, cousins and her parents, at the age of 11 years she began her sports career in high performance sport, participated in five school games, a stage of her career she did not get any medal sports and lovingly recalls the presence of two great coaches driving his career, is the case of Pablo Miranda and Tomas Fernandez.

She was promoted to the National School of Athletic Improvement (ESPA in Spanish) in 1988, among her main sporting results are: three times Olympic champion, three times world champion, one youth and two seniors. She also was three times champion of the World Cup, of the big four; she obtained two golds medals in the Grand Prix, plus three bronze and three silver ones. On the other hand, she deserved two Pan American titles and one silver, plus a Central American gold. It is worth mentioning that she has all the titles conferred by the International Volleyball Federation.

It is impressive to know that among her main satisfactions are her first and third Olympic gold medals, her delight for dancing, as well as her vocation for cooking, pleasures that she enjoys in the company of her three beautiful children, born and raised in a cradle of love and education.



When she refers to her coaches, she alludes first to her uncles Javier and Jesus, they were the ones who initiated her in volleyball, and later those who gave continuity to her career and she mentions Pablo Miranda and Tomás Fernández.

In this same order she highlights the transit while still a youth, by the hands of the teacher Ana Ibis Diaz, to whom she is always grateful because without her confidence she would not have become what she was, she also attributes merits to the coaches Celestino (Tinito) and Eider George, until finally arriving at the hands of that great coach who was Eugenio George. Similarly, she could not fail to mention the other coaches who contributed to her career (Luis Felipe Calderon, Antonio Perdomo, Jorge Garbey and Jorge Perez Vento).

She remembers with affection the friends she left when she went to Havana, the teammates of the Eide, some of whom later coincided with in the National ESPA and in the National Team and of her time in the National Team, mentioning Regla Torres, Tania Ortiz, Ana Ibis Fernandez, Mercedes Pomares, who, although she is not of the generation has all her friendship and appreciation.

She is very happy and nostalgic about her time in the Italian league, from where many memories of great foreign players emanate, who eventually became friends such as Irina Kirillova, Hilma Caldeira, Silvia Rolls, Antonella Bragallia.

With great pride she recognizes that Pinar del Río is the land where she was born, the land she will never deny, she is proud to be from Pinar del Río. Cuba, those four letters mean a lot to this glory of sport, heroism, revolution, patriotism, altruism, the country that has given her everything to be the professional she is today and the great athlete she was and with that same pride the people of Pinar del Rio consider her an illustrious daughter.

In short, she is an example of the Pinar del Río and Cuban volleyball players, coming from the humble class, formed from the first generations educated by the Revolution, she has put the name of the province and the country on high, being the bearer of values that forge her, a model of will that moves to act intentionally, over the difficulties, the setbacks and the state of mind. Paradigm of loyalty, fidelity, openness, nobility, honesty, sincerity and integrity.

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The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Tania Rosa García Hernández: Conception of the idea, literature search and review, preparation of the database, general advice on the subject matter, writing of the original (first version), revision and final version of the article, correction of the article, authorship coordinator, translation of terms or information obtained, review of the application of the bibliographic standard applied.



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