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Newsletter

Cuba and United States advance to Women's U-20 NORCECA Semifinals



GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala, July 10, 2014.- As top winners of the preliminary pool-play round, Cuba and United States advanced to the Semifinals of the Women's U-20 NORCECA Continental Championship at Teodoro Palacios Flores Gymnasium in Guatemala City.

The Cuban squad was led by Melissa Vargas with impressive 31 points in their victory by 25-16, 25-15, 17-25, 25-20 over defending champion Dominican Republic to win Pool A. In the clash for top spot in Pool C, United States defeated Mexico 3-0 (25-5, 25-21, 25-18).

In Pool B, the Central American classic was won by the Costa Rican who beat Guatemala in a five set thriller 25-17, 25-20, 22-25, 21-25, 15-8; both teams will play the quarterfinals.

The winners of this Friday's quarterfinals between Guatemala against Dominican Republic and Costa Rica facing Mexico will complete the four semifinalists.

Friday's schedule also presents the match between Nicaragua against St. Lucia, with the winners to play Martinique for seventh

place on Saturday.

Cuba 3, Dominican Republic 1

Opposite player Melissa Vargas with impressive 31 points, carried Cuba to defeat Dominican Republic 3-1 (25-16, 25-16, 17-25, 25-20) and win Pool A. The 92-77 victory of Cuba earned them a spot into the next round. It was an intense match, with a tactical display from the winners. Cuba showed power from the start while Dominican Republic reacted well only winning the third set and getting very close in the fourth. Cuba's offensive line was superior with a 54-34 margin, while the blocking and service categories finished tied by 11 and 8 points respectively. Dominican Republic wasn't able to take more advantage of Cuban's 24 unforced errors, while committing 19 of their own. Melissa Vargas powered up against Dominican Republic with 31 points, a tournament-high, including 26 kills and 4 aces. Outside hitters Diaris Perez and Claudia Hernandez contributed with 13 and 12 points respectively. Opposite Gaila Gonzalez led Dominican Republic with 19 points, followed by outside hitters Natalia Martinez with 13 points and Brayelin Martinez with 12 points.

United States 3, Mexico 0

United States won first place of Pool C at the Women's U-20 NORCECA Continental Championship defeating Mexico 3-0 (25-5, 25-21, 25-18). USA jumped to an easy start in the first set, without any difficulties as Mexico showed insecurity. The next two sets had longer rallies while Mexico's offensive over the net produced more points. The Americans held advantage in spiked by a 42-21 margin, they were also better in the blocking category by 7-3 as well as in service points by 4-2. The 75-44 victory earned the Americans a spot in the next round. Outside hitter Alexa Smith produced 15 points, with 3 blocks included, as the best scorer for USA. Rhamat Alhassan, Mikaela Foecke and Hayley Hodson chipped in with 8 points apiece. For Mexico, outside hitter Fernanda Bañuelos was the top scorer with 8 points.

Costa Rica 3, Guatemala 2

Costa Rica prevailed over hosts Guatemala 3-2 (25-17, 25-20, 22-25, 21-25, 15-8) on Thursday night. Costa Rica couldn't seal the Central American classic in three sets with Guatemala extending the match to a five set thriller in front of more than 1000 spectators. Costa Rica finishes the preliminary round as Pool B winners and advances along with Guatemala to the quarterfinals. The winners held a 10-7 advantage in the blocking category, a 9-5 margin in service points and 45-42 in spikes. With a math-high of 23 points, outside hitter Tania Carazo led Costa Rica's offensive line along with Monica Castro with 19 points. For Guatemala, outside hitter Maria Villagran and opposite Maria Garcia were the top scorers with 11 points apiece; Jessica Anleu added 10 points.