



Brazil Women Win Gold, Cuba Silver, Mexico Bronze

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil, July 21, 2007 - It was a glorious day at Copacabana Beach, in particular for host nation Brazil.

The feature match of the day saw the gold medal match between Brazil's team of Juliana Silva & Larissa Franca and Cuba's Dalixia Fernandez & Tamarra Larrea. While the Cubans put up a good fight, Brazil did not disappoint the crowd, and defeated the Cubans in straight sets with scores of 21-15, 21-17.

"We had butterflies in our stomachs at the beginning of the match, but then we could focus and went back to be the real Larissa and Juliana," said Larissa.

On the eve of her 24th birthday, Juliana celebrated the victory. "It is a gift. A very big emotion," she said while admitting that being the favourites put an extra pressure on them.

In the bronze medal match, the Mexican duo of Mayra Garcia & Bibiana Candelas defeated Canada's team of Sarah Maxwell & Marie Andre Lessard by scores of 22-20, 21-15.

"We began a little tense," noted Garcia following the match, "but we were able to keep our focus and move forward." Pleased with the bronze medal victory, Garcia commented, "I'm very proud for my country. It's important to take this medal home. I would like to offer it to my coach."

Men's semi-final action also got underway today. Ty Loomis and Hans Stolfus topped Cubans Francisco Alvarez Cutino and Leonel Munder 21-13, 17-21, 15-13. The victory assured the American duo the first U.S. medal in men's beach volleyball during the history of the Pan American Games.

The Americans will face Olympic champions Ricardo and Emmanuel of Brazil in the gold medal match on Sunday. In the other semi final, the host Brazilians defeated the Canadian team of Jason Kruger/Wes Montgomery 21-15, 21-16. The bronze medal match between Canada and Cuba will be contested earlier on Sunday.

"We will have to play our best match against Brazil to have any chance to win," Stolfus said. "Against Cuba, we served tough. Tomorrow against Brazil, we will have to do it again, and that may not be enough. It will be a great honor to be on the court playing against Brazil."

"Ricardo and Emmanuel form the best team in the world, and we will take any advantage we can," Loomis said when told the Brazilian duo had not heard much about them and if that is an advantage.

