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USA and Venezuela to semi finals from Pool B



RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil, July 25, 2007.- USA and Venezuela qualified to the semi finals of the Men's Volleyball Tournament of the Pan American Games.

The USA Men's Team swept Puerto Rico 25-22, 25-17, 25-23 to conclude the preliminary round with an undefeated record in three outings.

Venezuela defeated Argentina taking an important step toward the defense of the gold medal. After losing in their first match, the Venezuelans won the next two and finished with a 2-1 mark in Pool B with their 25-17, 25-21, 25-21 victory over Argentina (0-3).

Sean Rooney and Brook Billings were the best scorers for USA with 14 points apiece. Jose Rivera topped Puerto Rico with 12 points and Victor Rivera provided 10.

Harry Gomez with 19 points led Venezuela and Tomas Ereu and Luis Diaz had 16 and 10 respectively. Argentina had Gustavo Scholtis with 9 points and Diego

Stepanenko and Lucas Chavez with 8 apiece.

"We are going to have to play better the rest of the tournament," said coach Ron Larsen. "However, we pride ourselves on working hard. We can control our own effort, but we can not always control our performance."

"We will get in the gym tomorrow to iron some things out," said Larsen. "We need to work on serve-receive and our block defense. For us to be successful in the medal round, we will need to execute at a higher level for a longer period of time."

"We have taken an important step toward the crown but it is still a long way to go," said Ereu. "We were prepared tactically and mentally and things came out as we planned."

"My boys looked like champions today, very confident, focused and with great control of the main aspects of the game," said Ricardo Navajas, the coach of Venezuela.