

Hosts Dominican Republic among favorites at U20 Cup



SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic, April 18, 2015 – Hosts Dominican Republic are among the favorites to win the U20 Women's Pan American Cup to be held in Santo Domingo from April 19 to 24.

The home team has been under a strong program of preparation, playing against teams of Japan and United States ahead of the competition, said Wagner Pacheco, the Brazilian coach of the local squad.

Argentina's Mauro Silvestre is optimistic about their chances after winning the U18 Pan American Cup with the same group of players, while Chile's Hugo Jauregui expressed confidence about finishing among the top-three teams.

The coaches of the six teams taking part in the U20 Pan American Cup expressed their points of view about their teams' goals and expectations on the eve of the start of the competition in Santo Domingo on Sunday.

Mauro Silvestre, Argentina

"This is the same U18 team that won the Pan American Cup and the Invitational Tournament in Baja California and continues its development process ahead of the U18 World Championship. We are bringing two different players –one libero and one middle blocker- to watch them. Our objectives are very clear and this is an important competition in preparation for the worlds. We will try to win and I think we have the conditions to win."

Hugo Jauregui, Chile

"We have great expectations as we want to finish among the top-three and get points for the world ranking. We have had a strong preparation since the Dominican Republic invited us to come one week earlier to train and play. We know there are stronger teams that are above us in the ranking and because of that the challenge is a big one."

Andrés López Castro, Costa Rica

"Our job is to prepare these girls for the Central American Championship next December. The competition gives us the chance to play at a class A level event, a warm-up opportunity they have not yet met. In that tournament we plan to qualify to the NORCECA Championship as part of the rebuilding process we have started."

Wagner Pacheco, Dominican Republic

"Our team is very well prepared. We have had scrimmage matches against teams of Japan, United States and the Dominican seniors. We have played matches of high level winning and losing but always playing at a high level. The only problem is that for the first time they will be playing in front of the home crowd and it can create some pressure. But we are prepared for this tournament."

Luis Alberto León, Mexico

"Our main goal is to qualify to the world championship with a good position in the ranking. We hope to finish on the podium despite the fact we have not played preparation matches. It is a new team participating in its first international competition. I can see the girls well motivated with desire to take advantage of the opportunity."

Claudia Noguera, Nicaragua:

"It is a young team that for the first time is taking part in a high level competition with good teams from South America and NORCECA. The girls are thrilled about participating and we come to learn from the other teams. Our goal is to work as a team and go out every day to give our best."