



2003 Norceca Women Continental Championship

Dominicans overcame early tumbles to beat Puerto Rico

Santo Domingo.- The Dominican Republic scored a 3-0 victory over Puerto Rico in the most battled of three easy rides during the first day of action of the NORCECA's Women Championship, a qualifier event for the World Cup.

The Pan American Games champions had to overcome a well fought first set to defeat the young Puerto Rican squad **25-23, 25-16, 25-16** in a Pool A preliminary match.

In the other encounters of Day One, Canada crushed Trinidad & Tobago **25-12, 25-9, 25-10** in the opening match and Cuba beat Costa Rica **25-14, 25-11, 25-13** in Pool B. "Today the girls learned a lesson and is that there are no small enemies," said Jorge Garbey, the Dominican coach. "They were overconfident against the young team of Puerto Rico and it almost cost the first set." The Dominicans came back from a 17-21 deficit to take the first set with the attack of Cosiris Rodriguez and Yudelkis Bautista. In the next two, Garbey rotated his players who face Canada on Monday.

"I hope the team can play better tomorrow," said Rodriguez. "The key is to go out and have fun and forget about the pressure of being the Pan American champions playing before our fans. I think that is better to start bad and have a happy ending."

Rodriguez, Bautista and Milagros Cabral had 13 points each one and Nurys Arias joined the offense with 11. Yarimar Rosa had 11 for Puerto Rico.

With only three teams in Pool B, the key match to decide the winner of an automatic place in the semifinals will be the Cuba-USA match on Tuesday. "I think that will be a good game," said Yumilka Ruiz, the captain of Cuba. "We know the USA have a strong team but we hope to have the best result possible. Our goal here is to qualify for the World Cup and then we will think about the Olympics."

Luis Felipe Calderon, the Cuban coach said: "The difference between our squad and the one who lost to Dominican Republic in the Pan Am Games is that now we have our midleblocker Nancy Carrillo healthy. She couldn't

play in the gold medal match then and this time she is in our roster, so let will see what happens." Zoila Barros led the Cubans with 13 points, while Yaima Ortiz and Yanelis Santos had 12 and 10 respectively. Verania Willis had 12 for Costa Rica.

Canada used its first match against Trinidad & Tobago as a warm-uo for Monday's game against Dominican Republic. "We used the game to prepare for Dominican Republic," said Lorne Sawula, the Canadian coach. "Trinidad is a very young team and we expect stronger matches especially against the Dominicans."

"They rely on power and our game is of finesse, but we know each other very well and I expect a good confrontation," he added. "They are the Pan American Games champions but our team improves with every match." Amy Tutt led the Canadians with 15 points and Tammy Mahon added 11. Kelly Billiny had 11 for Trinidad & Tobago.

