

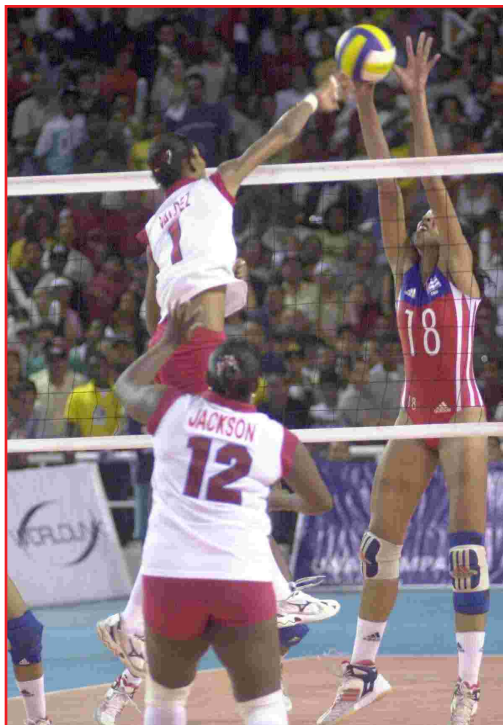


NORCECA WOMEN'S OLYMPIC QUALIFIER TOURNAMENT

Cuba had an easy victory over Dominican Republic

Cuba had an easy victory over Dominican Republic and looks ready to take the first place in the preliminary phase of the NORCECA Women's Olympic Qualifier. The Cubans won by score of 25-17, 25-16, 25-14 and will entertain Mexico on Friday, the weakest team in the tournament.

The combination of Yaima Ortiz and Yumilka Ruiz was both solid and accurate. Ortiz, who finished with 14 points, was successful in 10 of 15 attacks and Ruiz had all her points with 10 spikes out of 16 attempts. Zoila Barros scored 13. "It was a routine match with both teams already qualified for the next round. The Dominican Republic has one key player with a mild injury and they decided to give her a rest tonight," said



Luis Felipe Calderon. "I am expecting a strong battle if we meet again as it looks."

"Our team performed good and we didn't know the Dominicans had Milagros Cabral injured," said Ruiz, the Cuban captain. "We went out to give our best and looking for the victory."

"I rather prefer to have Cabral ready for the weekend matches than taking the risk of a major injury," said Jorge Garbey about his player who is nursing a mild hamstring injury. "I want to have my squad ready for Canada or Puerto Rico on Saturday and have another shot at the Cubans in the match for the gold medal and the trip to Greece," said Garbey.

Kenia Moreta and Annerys Vargas both scored 7 points for the Dominican Republic.

Puerto Rico defeats Mexico

Puerto Rico took an important step toward the semifinal round with a victory in consecutive sets over Mexico, who still have to win its first match. The score was 25-19, 25-20, 25-21.

Puerto Rico, who is now 1-2, had to come from six points back in the third set (13-19) to close the match. With the score evened at 19, Karina Ocasio scored three consecutive spikes to give her side room to breath. "We went out determined to improved from our first two matches against the squads of Cuba and Dominican Republic and we did it," said David Aleman, the coach of Puerto Rico. "Mexico was a tough rival tonight



but at the end our blocking and service guided us to the victory."

Veteran Eva Cruz led the Puerto Ricans with 15 points and the Ocasio sisters, Karina and Sheila, had 13 and 10 respectively. "It was a do or die match, and now we go after Canada trying to finish second in the preliminary round," said Xiomara Molero, the captain of Puerto Rico.

Jorge Azair, the Mexican coach, said his team is not physically prepared as they only trained eight days before this tournament "We can play solid at the start and in the middle of the sets, but we are showing some weakness at the end and our jumping capacity is not the same," he said. "The blocking of Puerto Rico killed us."

Claudia Rodriguez and Blanca Chan scored 14 and 10 respectively for Mexico.