

# **Ángel Fournier, two time World silver medalist**

**Timely preparation**

## The Cuban rower said he planned to go hard in the 1,000 meters to keep up with favorites such as Synek, Martin and Manson

Jorge C. de la Paz

• CUBA'S top rower, Ángel Fournier, ended his performance in the World Championships of this discipline in Sarasota-Bradenton, the United States, with a silver medal on the final day of the competition.

This is Fournier's third World Championship medal - and second silver after the one he won in Chungju, South Korea in 2013 - to equal his historic best in international competition.

The single sculls rower finished with a time of 6:43.490 seconds during the Group A final of the M1X open category, just behind Ondrej Synek (6:40.640) of the Czech Republic, who beat Fournier four years ago in the South Korean tournament.

Synek proved to be in a class of his own during the competition, winning his fifth World Championship gold medal. Nonetheless, Fournier from Guantanamo kept the

pressure on Synek throughout the tournament, even besting his opponent at times.

The Cuban completed the first 500-meter race of the competition in second place with



Fournier won silver during the 2017 Rowing World Championships.

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a time of 1:38.560 just behind Synek's 1:38.330.

The next race saw Fournier leading the Czech by one second, clocking 3:19.990 after the first kilometer. However, he wasn't able to maintain this pace, ceding to the European in the 1,500 and 2,000 meters finals, in a close competition.

Third place went to Britain's Thomas Barras (6:45.140), followed by Olympic silver medalist Damir Martin (6:45.500), Robert Manson (6:52.840) from New Zealand - defeated twice by Fournier in two World Cup competitions - and Germany's Tim Ole Naske (6:55.900) in that order.

Speaking in Sarasota-Bradenton to Ernesto Ruiz Ramos, special correspondent for Cuban television, Fournier cited training with the National Rowing Commission as the source of his achievement.

"We participated in two World Cups, I

trained in Italy and we did altitude training in Mexico. The aim was to make it to the final here in Sarasota."

Regarding the October 1 final, the World silver medalist explained he was moved from lane three to five, where the wind felt stronger, after a request by Synek. "I kept my concentration because I knew it would be a pretty intense race. As I advanced from the quarter to the semi finals I already knew who my rivals were, and started to prepare for the final, a great competition just as was hoped for.

My coach Joan M. Paula recommended I go hard for the first 1,000 meters and keep up with top rowers like Synek, Martin, and Manson. This World Championship has been different because I've been living with almost all my opponents, in the same hotel. We all get on well because we've known each other for years and we're rivals, but good friends.

I want to dedicate this medal to my mother; my daughter who was born this year and is my strength; and to my wife Yusmari Mengana," stated the athlete.

The performance by Fournier, also a finalist in the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games, in the recently concluded competition can only be described as excellent, winning the only medal from among Cuba's small delegation which finished in 21st place on the country medal chart, which was topped by Italy, with three golds, three silvers and a bronze, with New Zealand (3-2-2) and Australia (3-2-1) taking second and third respectively. •

# Pinar del Río to host national All-Star Game

Jorge Carlos de la Paz

• THE decision to hold the 57th National Baseball All-Star Game in Pinar del Río, an update on damages caused to sporting facilities by Hurricane Irma and the launch of a new cell phone app to promote sports among the population, were three topics addressed during the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation's (INDER) monthly press conference, led by its president Antonio Becali Garrido.

Yosvani Aragón, national director of baseball, announced that Pinar del Río will host the 30th edition of the All-Stars Game, given the outstanding performance of the province's team in the current Series and interest shown by its authorities.

This is the second time the island's westernmost province will host the game, after its Capitán San Luis Stadium saw the

very best of Cuba's baseball stars come to compete in 2001.

According to the official schedule, in the run-up to the second phase of the National Series, reinforcement selection will take place on October 20, with skills testing and veterans' games on the 21st, while the long awaited clash between the Occidentales and the Orientales - the line-ups for which will be announced at the end of the regular phase - will be held on the 22nd.

### RECOVERY FOLLOWING IRMA

Nuridis Rodríguez, director of investments at INDER, read a report on damage caused to sporting infrastructure by Hurricane Irma. According to the director, the worst affected provinces were Villa Clara, Camagüey, Ciego de Ávila, Sancti Spiritus, Matanzas, and La Habana.

Rodríguez noted that 98 facilities in Villa Clara suffered

damage, 10 of which have already been repaired; while problems across 57 and 34 institutions were reported in Camagüey and Matanzas, respectively, all of which are still awaiting repair.

Meanwhile, she explained that the majority of damage was limited to roofing, accounting for 85% of the reported destruction, while pavements and walls accounted for 10%, and fences and lampposts, the remaining 5%.

Rodríguez went on to note that facilities to have suffered the most damage at a national level include the newly remodeled Baraguá Swimming complex and recently inaugurated National Sailing School.

Lastly, Gladys Bequer, vice president of INDER, presented a new cell phone application, called "Cuba Activa y Saludable," commissioned by directors of the organization, in order to make citizens aware of the benefits of exercise or practicing a sport. •

## THE 23RD CENTRAL AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN GAMES

Alfonso Nacienceno

• TRAINING underway since September 28 by Cuba's pre-selection handball team in the Dominican Republic, will put them in good stead for the Central American and Caribbean Games in Barranquilla, Colombia, next year.

The group, featuring 14 players from both the men's and women's teams, will be in the sister country through October 12, after which both squads - each with a dozen outfielders and three goalkeepers- will compete for a ticket to the Colombian event in the qualifying tournament for the Caribbean region, October 22-29, in Cartagena de Indias.

According to Raymel Reyes, national handball methodologist, both teams will include players with a moderate level of experience, as well as others whose skills will be put to the test during this training period.

A total of 16 teams (eight men's and eight women's) will be competing for four tickets to Barranquilla 2018

during the regional qualifier; with another three tickets to be awarded during a Central American tournament.

The seven qualifying teams, in addition to the host squad, will thus make up the competition's eight team roster.

Cuba's women's selection won gold during the Veracruz 2014 Central American and Caribbean Games, while its men's squad took bronze, only surpassed by Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

According to Reyes, Cuba will arrive to Barranquilla with a completely new women's line-up, while the men's team will feature players who participated in the Veracruz competition, such as far right Omar Toledano; far left Yankiel Cruzata; pivot Alain Vizcay; and left wing Olanis Pérez; while goalkeeper Niurquis Mora is the only member of the women's squad to have competed in 2014 edition of the regional tournament.

Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic are once again competition favorites. Meanwhile, Cuba's women's team



Retaining their title won four years ago in Veracruz won't be easy for Cuba's women's team during the Barranquilla competition.

last appearance in an international competition was during the 2015 World Championships, finishing 23rd out of 24 teams; with the men's squad securing sixth place in the 2015 Toronto Pan American Games. •