



## II Women Volleyball Pan American Cup in Saltillo, Mexico.



### Puerto Rico with high hopes for Saltillo

The Puerto Rican Women National Team continues its big improvement at the world level after its historic tenth place achieved during the 2002 World Championship in Germany.

The "Borinquen" team has two months of intense preparation following the conclusion of the National League. Under the supervision of head coach David Aleman, a few more than 20 players are working out in every phase of training.

"Our goal is to be among the medallists in the Santo Domingo Pan American Games, and we are training with that in mind. Regarding the Pan American Cup in Mexico we will make all our best effort to grab a place for next year Grand Prix," said Aleman.

Puerto Rico will go to the Pan American Cup in Saltillo, México, looking for one of the four places assigned to the America Continent in the 2004 Grand Prix. The Puerto Ricans come from finishing in third place during the Salonpas Invitational Cup in Brazil and will be training in Havana, Cuba for 15 days.

The Puerto Rican offense is led by stellar spiker Aury Cruz, who has become the main weapon of the squad. Cruz, who made her debut in the National Team in 1997 when she was just 15 years old, has also improved her reception game. Meanwhile, the principal defensive responsibility will rest on the blocking of Jetzabel del Valle and Sheila Ocasio, whose combination at the net have been nicknamed "The Borinquen Great Wall".

Del Valle, by the way, was the leading blocker during the first two rounds of last World Championship in Germany.

### Yumilka Ruiz leads the Cuban Team for the Pan American Cup

Distinguished as a scorer and attacker during the 2002 World Championship in Germany, Yumilka Ruiz heads the Cuban National Team that will be defending the crown of the Second Women's Volleyball Pan American Cup to be played in Saltillo, Mexico, on June 28-July 5.

Another Cuban standout in the World Championships was Nancy Carrillo (Best Server), who is part of the squad along with Liana Mesa, Yanelis Santos, Anniara Munoz, Marta Sanchez and middle-blocker Zoila Barros, all part of the team that placed fifth in the World Championship last year.

Completing the squad, coached by Eugenio George and Luis Felipe Calderon, is Yaima Ortiz, Indira Mestre, Katia Guevara, Dulce Maria Tellez and Rosir Calderon, who, like Carrillo, stands at 1.91 meters-tallest on the team.

The team completed a rigorous phase of training in the Cuban capital before entering in the traditional Montreux Tournament in Switzerland, where they beat the Dominicans but lost to United States and China in their first event of the year after winning the Mexicali Centennial Cup where Dominican Republic, United States and Mexicali also took part.

Besides the importance of the coming Pan American Cup and qualifying for the 2004 Grand Prix, this event will serve as preparatory for the new generation of "The Morenas of the Caribbean" in view of the continental games scheduled in Santo Domingo on August 1-17.

Another important goal for the Cuban team this season is qualifying in the NORCECA tournament in September for the World Cup of Japan, where the first three tickets for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games will be awarded.

