

Item Type: Original Item
Received: 09/07/2021
Accepted: 03/11/2021

Grisel Herrera Méndez, a glory of Cuban basketball

Abstract

The research addresses the sports results of a figure who has contributed to the development of Cuban Basketball for more than 20 years, as part of the national youth and senior teams. The objective of the work is defined: to assess the main sports results of Grisel Herrera Méndez that distinguish her as a glory of Cuban Basketball. In the investigative process, different scientific methods and qualitative techniques are used, both theoretical and empirical, among them are the following: analytical-synthetic, inductive-deductive, life history, biographical, document analysis, interview and triangulation, the way in which the research methodology is used allows bibliographies related to the research topic to be consulted, which makes it easier to collect and triangulate the data needed in the research process. The result is a biographical document where the main sporting results obtained by the figure under investigation can be seen, as well as assessments of different subjects linked to her during her sporting and working life. Finally, assessments are made to arrive at clear and precise conclusions, in which this basketball player can be defined as an athlete who is an example at all times for the personal qualities she shows during her sports career.

Keywords: sports glory, Cuban basketball, sports and sports results

Introduction

In Cuba there are numerous historical studies in which many of the sports achievements obtained at a national and international level are related, however part of sports history is not known, mainly sports research or local figures. The results that are presented have their actions in Basketball, opposition cooperation sport, emerged in the United States of America in the month of December 1891.

Basketball arrived in Cuba more than a hundred years ago, it was introduced by young Cubans who studied in different North American schools, and who attended the gyms of the cities where they studied. In the history of sports in Santa Clara until 1969, Hernández (2020) states the following:

In the year 1906, 2vs2 and 3vs3 games were frequent in the gymnasium of the Asociación de Jóvenes Cristianos de La Habana, their practice passed to the university campuses and due to the enthusiasm of José Sixto de Solas, they managed to integrate a team that faced to the team of the aforementioned association on October 13, the Havana university is the winner with a score of 19 x 16, later they played 4 more games and the university team was the winner in all of them. This year, Basketball became part of the activities of the campuses of the University, Secondary Education Institute and different religious institutions. (p.12)

The first indication of women's practice in the country appears since the 1920s, in 1924 the Women's Athletic Association of Cuba was made official. In this way, official women's basketball championships began to be held on the island, governed until the 1950s by said

association. In the international arena, Cuba debuted with a women's basketball team in the III Central American Games in El Salvador in 1935.

In the old province of Las Villas, specifically in Santa Clara, the practice of Basketball became a reality from the 1930s, and the boom in its practice grew vertiginously. This event takes place at the Villa Clara Tennis Club and since its inception it has been practiced by men and women.

Since the creation of the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (Inder) in 1961, Cuba has had relevant results at a regional and continental level in women's basketball, fundamentally in the 20th century from 1979, when for the first time it was they won the Pan American Games, eleven years later they took third place in a World Championship, the best Cuban result in Basketball matches in both sexes at this level, as well as the fourth Olympic place in the Barcelona 92 games. In these last events and others, participated Grisel Herrera Méndez, a tall woman with excellent physical possibilities to practice this sport.

During the study, several investigations carried out on the development of Basketball in Santa Clara were consulted, and life stories of prominent figures in this sport of the authors: Dueñas (2009); Salabarría (2012); Pérez (2014) and Hernández (2020), which constitute the main background of this research.

In addition, different articles dealing with the topic of historical research and local history were consulted, such as: Deriva, definition and operationalization of a suggestive category for historical studies by Perren and Lamfre (2018); Foundations of the study of local history in the social sciences and its importance for civic education by Calvas, Espinosa and Herrera (2019); History and sport, the need to study the genesis of sports by Esperanza (2019) and Stories of social lives in the face of the confinement of COVID19 by Flores and Zúñiga (2020).

The need to study the sports career of Grisel Herrera Méndez has been latent for a long time and although part of her history is known, many people are unaware of her actions and sports results, mainly the young generations; In addition, the lack of a material or document that compiles his sports and work career, as well as his main sports results in Cuban Basketball, limits the study of this figure declared glory of the sport, due to the achievements made in it.

The life story of Grisel Herrera Méndez, contributed to the bibliographic collection of the province for the preparation and training of future athletes in the sports education centers of the Villa Clara territory, it also serves as an example for the training in values that new and future basketball players.

Due to the above, the research process was developed from the following objective: Assess the main sports results of Grisel Herrera Méndez that distinguish her as a glory of Cuban Basketball.

Materials and methods

The research carried out is ascribed to the Qualitative Methodology, which has as one of its purposes to address the personal world of the subjects. In the case of the present work, the extensive sports career of Grisel Herrera Méndez was investigated; A study is carried out aimed at providing a faithful image of the sporting life of this figure, for which qualitative information collection methods and techniques were used, bearing in mind the criteria issued by the authors Cabezas, Andrade, and Torres (2018) in his work: Introduction to the methodology of scientific research.

The methods and techniques that were used respond to the historical approach of sports personalities, especially life history, where the fundamental thing to analyze is the sports career. They stand out from them:

Analytical-synthetic: it allowed the logical and objective analysis of the facts and processes that occurred, which makes it possible to establish the necessary directions in the stages of the investigative process, as well as to delve into the different conceptions to subject the different results obtained during the investigation to evaluation.

Inductive-deductive: allows the decomposition of the phenomenon or process that is studied in the main elements that make it up, to determine its particularities.

Life history: it is the narration of the life experience of a person, it is used in the investigation to make an analysis of the reality lived by the investigated subject, in relation to his actions in Basketball, it allowed to separately assess the data that They allow to identify and highlight the main stages of Grisel Herrera Méndez's life in her career as a basketball player.

Biographical: it is used to show the subjective testimony of the person under investigation, it serves to capture the events and assessments that the subject makes of his own existence as an autobiographical account, which the researcher obtains through successive interviews.

Document analysis: it is one of the most widely used information collection methods in qualitative methodology. It fulfilled different tasks such as support for more direct methods of collecting information, favoring the validation and verification of the information collected, as well as the reconstruction of events.

Interview: it is used with the objective of obtaining opinions, criteria and assessments about the sporting career of the figure under study, in order to know fundamental aspects of their sporting actions in provincial, national and international basketball.

Triangulation: its basic principle is to contrast the information obtained for its analysis from different angles in order to minimize errors and interpret the data.

Results and Discussion

Grisel Herrera Méndez was born on June 5, 1971 in Santa Clara, she lived in the town of Esperanza belonging to the municipality of Ranchuelo, daughter of Caridad Méndez Moya and Pedro Herrera García, at the age of 10 she started in sports when she was captured by her first coach Ángel Jiménez Portelo, since he had excellent height and conditions for the practice of basketball.

Due to his characteristics, qualities and potential, Grisel started at the School of Sports Initiation (EIDE) with a height of 1.63 cm in 1982, due to his performance he participated in several school events that were not of his category, mostly he did it with the Superior category.

In interviews with his first coaches, it was found that: "...from the beginning he stands out for his discipline, dedication to training, perseverance and technical quality, qualities that contributed to the fact that in the future he could represent the province and the country in numerous events...".

National and international results in the pioneer and school category

Every athlete who is in a sports school like the EIDE, always thinks of representing his province in the High Performance National School Games, the participation of this figure in these competitions is summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Participation of Grisel Herrera Méndez in Pioneer and School Games.

Nro.	Year	Event	City Venue	Place
1	1982	I and II Pioneer Games	Havana City	2do
2	1983			1ro
3	1984	I and II School Games	Santiago de Cuba	3ro

4	1985	III y IV Juegos Escolares		2do
5	1986		Villa Clara	
6	1987		Havana City	1ro

Source: self made

Grisel in 1982 and 1983 participated in the first two Pioneer Games in Tarará, Havana City in the 11-12 category, from that moment on she was selected for the national team of the category. Its pioneering international results are presented in table 2:

Table 2. International participation of Grisel Herrera Méndez in the Central American and Caribbean Convivio

Nro.	Year	Event	City Venue	Place
1	1982	Central American and Caribbean Convivio	Caguas, Puerto Rico	2
2	1983	Central American and Caribbean Convivio	District Federal Mexico	1

Source: self made

In the four School Games she was on the award podium, always ascending, first in the 13-14 year old category, she served as team captain. In 1986 he moved to the 15-16 category. In 1987, she obtained 1st place and in the discussion for the title she scored 43 points and was the leading scorer in the championship.

National and international results in the youth category

It should be noted that he belonged to this category and was already participating in higher category competitions. She participated between 1986 and 1989 in the National Youth Games, she began to perform as a forward, at this stage she established herself as a great shooter in long distance shots. Their performance in this instance is represented in Table 3.

Table 3. National performance in the youth category

Nro.	Year	Event	Place
1	1986	Junior National Games	2
2	1987		
3	1988		1
4	1989		3

Source: self made

An important element is that his first performances in the youth, he performs them first in international events and later in national competitions. Their international results appear in Table 4.

Table 4. International performance in the youth category

Nro.	Year	Event	City Venue	Place
1	1986	Youth Friendship Games	Bulgaria	3ro
2	1986	Central American Championship	Mexico	1ro
6	1988	Junior Pan American Championship	Brazil.	3ro

8	1989	Youth Friendship Games	Italy	5to
9	1989	Junior World Championship	Spain	9no

Source: self made

In 1986 Grisel was recruited for the Escuela Superior de Perfeccionamiento Nacional Atlético (ESPA) with coach Rigoberto Chávez Bonora. The talent and quality allowed him to obtain higher achievements than those he had in the 15-16 category. This year he played for the first time in the Villa Clara team of the 1st category called "Las lobeznas", once again he is ahead of the category in which it develops.

Her teammates and her coaches describe her as follows: "..., to her quality as a three-point shooter, we add her technical quality; He did not have much physical capacity, but he sought to improve resistance and movements that could help to obtain results in the team, he became versatile (...), another important element is that, at this stage, as in previous categories, I continue playing in his category, but because of the quality he showed he performed in higher categories...".

National and international results in the senior category

In 1988, the Villa Clara wolves began the journey towards a goal that no female group had achieved; win three national titles in a row, in this period the team had Leonor Borrell, María Elena León, Grisel Herrera Méndez and Odalys Alfonso as fundamental axes. The first step began on October 7 in the city of Santiago de Cuba, with the celebration of the qualifying phase. On this occasion they achieved seven successes in seven outings, Grisel Herrera Méndez stood out as she had done before in other categories, her results allowed her to be among the top scorers in the championship.

In the bibliographic review carried out and in the interviews carried out, it was possible to know that Grisel participated in 12 National Championships of the 1st Category, her performance in these helped her to be promoted to the National Pre-selection of older players as an exchange player, these titles were obtained under the directed by Miguel del Rio.

His actions in this intense international stage of the 1st category are summarized in table 5 as follows:

Table 5. International performance in the 1st category.

Nro.	Year	Event	City Venue	Place
1	1990	Basketball Center Championship	Mexico	1ro
2		Central American and Caribbean Games		
3	1991	Panamerican Games	La Habana	2do
4		Americas Pre-Olympic	Brazil	3ro
5	1992	Olympic Games	Espain	4to
6	1993	Basketball Center Championship	Puerto Rico	1ro
7	1994	Preparatory stops (without places as they are not official competitions)	China and Australia	-

8	1995	Basketball Center Championship	Honduras	1ro
9	1996	Olympic Games	Atlanta	6to
10	1997	Basketball Center Championship	Puerto Rico	1ro
11	1998	World Championship	Germany	7mo
12		Central American and Caribbean Games	Venezuela	1ro
13	1999	Basketball Center Championship	Havana	1ro
14		Americas Pre-Olympic		
15		Panamerican Games	Canadá	
16	2000	Olympic Games	Australia	9no

Source: self made

In 1990 he participated in the Central American and Caribbean Games that took place in Mexico, in the summary of the event the following is expressed. "Grisel has an outstanding performance, above all maintaining as always his wonderful aim in medium and long distance shots" (Inder, 1990, p. 10), for which he contributed to the triumph of the Cuban team that conquers the 1st place, in this event that was part of the main competitions within the Olympic Cycle.

Grisel states that: "...1996 was a year of various mishaps where the team had its ups and downs, it was the Olympic Games where the team obtained sixth place and were led by coach Miguel del Río. This was one of her most outstanding stages within the team, she remains as the fourth scorer of three-point shots in the games...". She assumed the role of outstanding figures who did not participate and definitively consolidates herself as one of the most important basketball players in Cuba and, therefore, in Villa Clara.

After having become a mother, she returns to the courts and participates in her last competition, a National Championship held in Pinar del Río, the team obtains fourth place and Grisel stands out as the leading scorer of three points.

One of the coaches who spent the longest time with the athlete in provincial and national teams is Miguel del Río, who states the following: "... as a player she stood out in medium and long distance shots, I would say that there was not and has not appeared another athlete with those characteristics in the province of Villa Clara...". Later he states: "...his sporting quality contributed to his winning three 1st category National Championships and a second place under his command. All his results are the product of great effort and constant work in training...".

She also points out that: "...among her qualities, it stands out that she is a very pleasant person, with a good cultural level, she always maintained good interpersonal relationships with the other athletes and their coaches and that she had a perfect command of English...".

This great basketball player whose most notable quality is her effectiveness in medium shots, but above all from long distance, who, as her coach, Miguel del Río, said: "...she did not have an exceptional physique to stay in the national team for so many years, but he remained due to his discipline, perseverance, effort and dedication, he stopped playing

at 30 years old...". His official retirement takes place in 2004 in Havana, in the Ciudad Deportiva.

Duties as coach after retirement

His job performance is short, but it is important to note that here he has had success as well as his sports career. She began in 2002, in the Felipe Santiago Hernández Sports Complex and the following year she began as a coach in the provincial ESPA of Villa Clara. In 2006, he left for Venezuela to fulfill an internationalist mission.

Upon her return, she rejoined the Combined Sports for a year and then moved as head coach of the women's 15-16 team of the EIDE Provincial Héctor Ruiz Pérez until 2010, where she obtained a silver medal in the 15-16 in the National School Games, she is currently the coach of the youth team that won a gold medal in the recent National Youth Championship, held in 2011, due to her results she was promoted to head coach.

General reviews about Grisel Herrera Méndez

When performing an analysis of the results obtained during the investigative process, the following can be stated:

Grisel Herrera Méndez is among the most outstanding athletes in the history of women's basketball in the province of Villa Clara and is among the best in Cuba. She was a very disciplined athlete, with great will, demanding of herself, discreet and introverted, possessing values such as: solidarity and discipline, among others, which she transmitted to her sports team at all times.

In Basketball, she excelled at three-point shots, developed an offensive game, was an athlete with good physical preparation who made up for physical limitations with her commitment to training and playing. In her career as an athlete, she was considered very technical, combative, balanced, who knew how to control her nerves and emotions, characteristics that helped her obtain relevant results in the sport.

According to the testimonies of her teammates, coaches, as well as other people who are related to her during her life, she can be classified with virtues such as: simplicity, honesty, as a very supportive person, she is very cheerful and likes to learn a lot.

Regarding Grisel Herrera Méndez's style of play, her coach Miguel del Río commented: "...there was not, nor is there currently any athlete like her who, although she did not have exceptional physical conditions due to her effort and dedication, managed to stay for a long time in the provincial and national teams. In 1998 he played a decisive role fundamentally against Italy, scoring around 15 points in the finals of the match, thus achieving the pass of the Cuban team to the semifinal phase...".

Conrado Pérez Armenteros, former basketball athlete and prominent Villa Clara coach, expressed the following about the figure under investigation: "...she was a disciplined athlete, she was characterized by her aggressiveness. He was in poor physical condition, but he was very persevering during his sporting career in Villa Clara and national basketball..." He stood out for his excellent aim from the midfield and mainly from long distance. She was a very responsible and phlegmatic player, especially when deciding in the final minutes of the match..."

Pedro Abreu basketball coach and former athlete stated: "... I consider that Cuban basketball has had two peak moments, the bronze medal achieved by the men's team at the Munich Olympics in 1972 and the bronze medal achieved by the women's team in the 1988 World Championship, made up, among others, of Leonor Borrell, María Moré and Grisel Herrera Méndez, therefore, Grisel is among the greats of the province and Cuba..."

María Elena León, a member of the National Team, when referring to Grisel, expressed: "... the main virtues that she has, I consider to be her intelligence, charisma, she is a very loved person, she likes to interact with everyone, she is very quiet, introverted, passive,

she doesn't know undeterred by anything, she is slow for things, for me she is everything, if you have any problem you can count on her, also for basketball she gave everything...". Villa Clara teammate Yunia Pacheco Valencia narrates an anecdote that speaks for itself of Grisel's dedication and love for Basketball, she says: "...in a 1st Category championship in Pinar del Río, when she had recently become a mother and was no longer part of the National Team, in a Villa Clara match against Holguín I passed the ball to her, she received it and threw it more than 6.25 meters, that is, 3 points, the basket fell and we won that match for two points and in that same championship, after becoming a mother, she was the leading scorer of three points, despite not having trained permanently...".

Regarding the sports performance of some athletes from Villa Clara in the Olympic Games, reference is made to the figure under study in the Vanguardia newspaper:

A quartet of athletes from Villa Clara could add their third participation in the Olympic Games in Beijing, which would equal the record for attendance at summer events for athletes from this province. Until now, the basketball players María Elena León and Grisel Herrera Méndez classify as the only ones in the territory that they have managed to compete in a trio of occasions in Olympic Games. Both were in the Olympic Games of Barcelona-92, where the criollas occupied the fourth position. Later, they attended the Atlanta-96 Games, in which they became two of the main players of the quintet that occupied sixth place, (...). Later they took part in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, a contest that gave the Cubans ninth position. (Rojas, 2008, p. 7)

Conclusions

The performance of Grisel Herrera Méndez for 20 years in Basketball, made possible her participation in the Olympic cycle games, regional, continental and world championships, which endorses her as a glory of Cuban sports.

In Basketball, Grisel Herrera Méndez stood out in three-point shots, developed an offensive game, was always a well-prepared athlete who made up for physical limitations with her dedication in training and play.

Grisel Herrera Méndez is one of the sports athletes in Villa Clara who has participated in three consecutive Olympic Games.

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