

Isel, the picture of a Caribbean Morena

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Isel Saavedra León's has been, perhaps, the most difficult time that a Cuban high-performance athlete has had to live to integrate a first-rate national team. The ex-volleyball player from San Luis was part of the legendary women's volleyball team called Las Morenas del Caribe in the late 1980s and first half of the 1990s.

Although the Olympic glory was elusive, the auxiliary attacker was part of the sextet that among other titles won the gold medal at the Pan American Games in Havana in 1991 and the World Cup in Osaka in the same year.

Isel currently serves as deputy director of the Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER) in her home municipality. That's as far as we go this week to learn more about her sporting life.

Repeated triumphs in school events would catapult her to the national team pre-selection. Already in the ESPA I began to train with Celestino Suárez, "Tinito", one of the instructors with more experience in Cuban volleyball".

With only 15 years Isel would integrate for the first time the staff of the Greater Antilles to a foreign event. "It was a competition in Czechoslovakia, my family had to wait for me to return to celebrate the 15, that was my international debut".

The gold obtained in the Savaria Cup, in Hungary in 1987, predicted the inclusion of the morena pinareña in the representative that a year later would dispute the Olympic Games with seat in Seoul, South Korea. However, the decision of the authorities of our country not to participate in this multiple event would deprive him of the opportunity.

During the next summer cycle, the athlete from the westernmost of the provinces would add to her showcases the subtitles of the World Youth Championship in Peru in 1989 and the Reebok Cup in Germany that same year, as well as the gold metals of the Nederland and Bremen tournaments in 1991. The Central American and Caribbean Games in Ponce in 1993 and the Bremen Tournament in 1994 would be the last events at the highest level in which Isel Saavedra would participate representing the four-letter uniform.

"The life of an athlete is very hard, you have to know that you have to sacrifice yourself, it's either one thing or the other and practically that's where your youth goes. To the final question of whether he has faith in the recovery of Cuban volleyball in the immediate future, he answers tacitly: "I hope so, because nobody respects us in the world anymore.