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Salt Lake City

USA Women qualify for 2006 World Grand Prix

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (June 16, 2005) – The USA Women's National Volleyball Team qualified for the 2006 World Grand Prix Thursday night following a 3-1 win over Puerto Rico in the quarterfinals of the Pan American Cup.

Nancy Metcalf (Hull, Iowa) scored a match-high 19 points, Jennifer Joines (Milpitas, Calif.) added 16 points and Jane Collymore (Englewood, Calif.) pitched in with 14 points as Team USA overcame a slow start to post a 24-26, 25-21, 25-22, 25-20 victory.

Stanford-bound Cynthia Barboza (Long Beach, Calif.), who has been hampered by a knee injury, came off the bench to spark the comeback for the United States and finished the match with eight points on seven kills and one block.

The Americans' win, combined with Brazil's 3-0 decision over Canada, advanced the winners to the tournament semifinals scheduled for Friday night. The United States will play the Dominican Republic, while Cuba will take on Brazil.

The USA is also guaranteed of being one of the top three NORCECA finishers at the Pan American Cup (along with Cuba and the Dominican Republic) and earns an automatic berth in next year's premier women's tournament, the World Grand Prix. Brazil is assured of being the top finisher from the South America zone and also qualified for next year's Grand Prix.

"We went into the match prepared, but the pressure of the match seemed to affect us at times early in the match," said Team USA setter Lindsey Berg (Honolulu, Hawaii), a 2004 Olympian. "Strangely the emotion level of both teams was surprisingly low in the beginning of the match. There was a good crowd, but they didn't seem to be pulling for either team. Fortunately, we came through and obtained the goal of this trip – to qualify for the 2006 World Grand Prix. Now we can play loose in the semis and grow as a team."

Metcalf, who played professionally in Puerto Rico last season, blasted 16 kills and three service aces in the win. Joines had nine kills, a match-high five blocks and two aces, while University of Florida All-American Collymore registered 14 kills.

Former Florida star Aury Cruz scored a team-high 17 points on 15 kills and two blocks to lead Puerto Rico. Jetzabel Del Valle added 13 points on 11 kills and two blocks.

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