

Perez Selected to Colombia National Team Camp

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COLOMBIA -- Miami redshirt sophomore Catalina Perez was one of six goalkeepers selected to the Colombian Senior National Team training camp in preparation for the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup this summer.

Perez' trip marks the third time the Boca Raton, Fla., native has trained with the Colombian Senior National Team. She competed in the Pan-American Games for Colombia at the age of 17, and also trained with the team before the 2012 London Olympics, where she was the final cut and listed as an alternate.

Perez, who missed Miami's 2014 season while recovering from an ACL injury, competed for Colombia at the 2010 U-20 World Cup in Germany when she was just 15 years old.

Making Colombia's 2015 World Cup roster would represent a dream fulfilled for Perez.

"The more time I spent in Colombia and the more cities I visit, the more I fall in love with my country," Perez said. "Wearing yellow, blue and red means more to me every day; when I put the shirt on, I feel a certain fire in my heart."

Colombia will host three camps before this summer's World Cup, scheduled for June 6 – July 5, 2015 and hosted by Canada. Typically, national teams select three goalkeepers to the official team roster.

"The competition is always tough, but it's healthy and I believe it is making us better for the three that will travel to Canada," Perez said.

Head coach Mary-Frances Monroe said Perez' quick return from injury is a true testament to the redshirt sophomore's ability to rise to the occasion.

"I am very excited for Catalina, having worked her way back from an ACL tear last summer," Monroe said. "She has been committed and determined to get healthy to compete again. It's only because of her hard work that she was selected again to go into Colombia's National Team camp."

Perez has ample experience at the youth national team level, where she has been a consistent contributor for Colombia since eighth grade. She served as back-up keeper for the Colombia team that competed in the 2010 U-20 World Cup, and also served as starting goalie for a team that finished in fourth in Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol (CONMEBOL) regional qualifying.

"Going and playing in the FIFA Women's World Cup has been a dream of mine since as far as I can remember," Perez said. "Now having the possibilities of having my dream come true is indescribable."

Monroe says Perez' selection to the national team camp can only help the rising star when she returns in preparation for another season of ACC play this fall.

"It says a lot about Cat's character and determination," Monroe said. "We are also excited to get her back on the playing field here at UM." After plenty of experience competing at the youth national team level, Perez said the chance to make the senior women's team provides her with extra motivation. "Along with my family and the people who truly support me, the World Cup is what motivates me to push myself harder in all areas of my life," she said. "It has helped me overcome obstacles, and fuels and strengthens me every day. Going and playing would be extremely fulfilling and special."