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## Focus on...Venezuela Courts grew by +700% in one year

In Venezuela, where the **Puerto Cabello Premier P2** – the fourth event of the season of the professional circuit governed by the **FIP** – is being played this week, a real ‘padel mania’ has broken out in recent years. According to **FIP Research & Data Analysis Department**, from 2022 to 2023 the number of courts has grown by 700% (from 30 to over 200, more than 100 of them in the capital Caracas). A strong contribution to the growth of the sport in the country has been made by the **Federación Venezolana de Pádel (FVP)** born in February 2019 and since July 2023 an official member of **the International Padel Federation (FIP)**. The FVP has more than 1,500 members, but the amateur movement is of several hundred thousand players: last year, one of the largest tournaments by membership in the whole of Latin America was held with the participation of 1,440 players (**Padel Fest Venezuela**) and the ‘**Primera Liga Universitaria de Pádel**’, a tournament approved by the FVP that aims to promote the sport in the country’s universities, has just been born this year.

At the professional level, development is also evident: in October 2023 the fifth edition of the ‘**Panamericano Absoluto de Pádel APF**’ was held, and in December the first **CUPRA FIP Tour** tournament in history, the **FIP Rise Caracas**. The country's best player in terms of FIP ranking is **Juan Andres Perez Rios** (No. 508 in the world), thanks to the final reached at the FIP Rise in Caracas: in the FIP ranking there are another 52 players in the men's and six in the women's rankings.

The first **FIP Tour tournament in history**, the FIP RISE TPC Alkmaar (Netherlands) in June **2019**, was won by Venezuela’s **Roberto Rodriguez** paired with Argentina’s **Fermin Ferreyra**: it was the only FIP tournament won by a player from this country. In Venezuela, according to Sebastián Rodríguez, one of the pioneers of the sport in the country, the first padel court was built in 2006 in **La Cinta de Las Mercedes**, in Caracas. Being the oldest court, it is surrounded by walls and not glass like the current ones, but it is still working. Then, on 12 October 2015, Francisco Ferreira inaugurated the **Venezuela Padel Club**, located on Calle La Florencia, 500 metres from the Santa María University in Miranda.

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