

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Dominican Republic vs Venezuela

Friday, 10 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Venezuela

Martin Pérez

Andrés Giménez

Jose Altuve

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. In this group we have spoken a lot about the Dominican Republic as being the favorite of the group more than Venezuela or even Puerto Rico. How do you take this? How do you consider this? As a challenge or what? How do you take this?

MARTIN PÉREZ: This is what we have been doing, at least in my case, for a long time now. I have been pitching for many years now. Of course, it's a challenge for any team. Personally speaking, the first thing is that I'm not under pressure. I've tried to control my emotions, my feelings, and this is going to be very useful.

Tomorrow it's like a playoff game. The fans will be very happy. There will be many emotions. However, as players, we know how to control those situations, and this is key. I'm confident. I'm confident in my repertoire, and I'm going to play my game.

Q. Hello. A question for both of you. What's your experience playing with Miguel Cabrera? It might be his last year in the MLB. Have you learned anything from him, maybe piece of advice, et cetera?

MARTIN PÉREZ: Miguel has great leadership in this team. The way he has been treating us, it's impressive. We are comfortable. We are part of this, and we believe we belong to this team. When you have a leader such as Miguel and he makes you feel as part of the team, and if there are no egos in the clubhouse, that feels very good. You can express your opinions because you are part of a team.

ANDRÉS GIMÉNEZ: To me it's a dream come true, the experience I'm living with these players. I grew up



admiring these guys. His leadership, he makes us feel we belong to a very important thing, and this is great from Miguel.

Q. In the previous Classic you were part of the Venezuela pitching staff. The Venezuelan pitching was not good in that Classic, but you were able to improve your pitching in the last few years in the Majors. How different is Martin Pérez from that Classic to the Martin Pérez today?

MARTIN PÉREZ: I'm much more mature. As you all know, last year for me was the best year in my career.

I'm not more important than anybody else, but I'm sure that everything is going to be okay because I have learned pitching better, and that's very important to me. I'm more focused on myself and the hitters. I'm trust in the plan that we have, and I'm convinced of the things that we were said in the meeting. By doing my job, by playing my game, it's going to be very useful. But I feel well.

Q. Martin, I'm going to ask you a question. If you don't mind, please, I'm going to ask the question in both Spanish and English. If you can answer.

You have experience in the Classic. What's the piece of advice that you can give to other pitchers if they don't have this experience, how to balance the commitments that you have? You have previous WBC experience, the fact that some are fighting still for spots on Major league teams, and at the same time you have a commitment to your country to perform at your very best.

MARTIN PÉREZ: I think the emotions is really important for us because each game in this event is going to be like a playoff game, but at the same time you have the chance to show to your team that you can do it and you can pitch at a big league level.

I look at it that way. You have a chance to come here and perform and do your job and get the best hitters in the world out. I think that's the biggest thing for me.

(In Spanish) I believe that if you were able to control your emotions, you can do many things. This is like a playoff



game, and the fans are excited. The adrenaline, you know, it's totally different from when the season starts.

I believe that if you do this the right way or with your convictions, the teams where you play are going to realize that you can dominate the best hitters in the world. That's very important to me. If you control the emotions and the nerves, everything is going to be all right.

Q. For both of you, how does it feel to play in South Florida, the capital of the Venezuelan exile community. You're going to have a lot of support of the fans. What does that mean to you?

MARTIN PÉREZ: We have great responsibility. As you say, we are in Florida. There are many Latino fans, many people from Venezuela. I think that's great for us. People that believe in us, that support us. We have a whole country watching us, and that's a huge responsibility for us. We are representing our country. I think and I am convinced that we are very well prepared to come here and to compete against any team.

We have the chance to make history. We have to take one step at a time. We have to be firm, but we trust in the team.

ANDRÉS GIMÉNEZ: Yes, coming to play in Florida in this kind of tournament is very special. We have many fans, Latino fans, especially Venezuelans. There are many of them here, and it's going to be the case tomorrow.

We're going to have the support from the fans. We are going to do our best for them and for our country.

Q. Hello, Martin, Andrés. The first question, you have the chance to beat the Dominican Republic in this kind of tournament, the WBC. What would it mean for you to get that first triumph, the first win against the Dominican Republic? Now for you, Martin, what do you think that was the main adjustment you made last year in order to have the best season of your career, as you said?

MARTIN PÉREZ: There is rivalry, of course, but a healthy rivalry between the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, but we don't have to be focused only on the Dominican Republic. We have to beat the other teams as well.

Everyone is looking forward to this game, of course. There are many expectations, like I said before. We have had great preparation. The chemistry, the energy in the team is something that I never felt before. Now, how I face the hitters, it's been impressive. When I realized in my career that I was paying attention, a lot of attention to the hitter, I

realized that the way the pitcher attacks is key for the success.

Q. You are one of a few players that have experience in the Classic in the Venezuelan roster. Andrés Giménez is the opposite; he doesn't have as much experience as many other players. Is that good? Is that bad? Is experience important in this kind of championship? The same question for Andrés.

MARTIN PÉREZ: Yes, I think so, but we have been saying the past few days, we all have the talent to be here, but I can tell you that we can not do more. We have to do what we have to do. Sometimes we want to do more, and I believe that the experience or experienced players are going to help the younger players.

This is a great mix, and we have to find a way to combine both things to go out to the field and to play our game, to hit. We as pitchers, to throw the pitches that we have to throw.

ANDRÉS GIMÉNEZ: As a team, as a group, we have to be united, as we are today, to play inning after inning, game after game. We have to be focused on the things that we can control as players and as a team.

We are expecting a great result. We have great energy or chemistry on the team. Young players, experienced players, they're helping us. They give us advice, and we kind of take advantage of that since we are at the same page.

Q. Jose, obviously there's nothing like playing for your Major League team. Obviously, that's the team that pays you, but just talk about the fact playing for your country. There's nothing like that feeling of playing and representing your country.

JOSE ALTUVE: Absolutely. I've said it many times. It's an honor for me and great opportunity to represent my country. I'm really happy. The chemistry you see in the clubhouse is amazing. All these guys, they're just talking about winning the tournament, and that's what we want to do.

Q. Venezuela and the Dominican Republic are starting as one of the most anticipated games in the tournament. What do you expect about this first game against the Dominican Republic?

JOSE ALTUVE: We know that we're going to face a very talented team with very good players. We might face maybe the best pitcher in the Majors, but we know what we have in our team in Giménez, Acuña, and they are



superstars. With a swing they can change the game.

Thank you.

I believe that the game is going to be very intense from the first inning. Considering also the fans that will be in the park. Let the best team win.

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Q. Any comment about playing against your Houston teammates, especially from Puerto Rico, Maldonado? How does that feel?

JOSE ALTUVE: He called me these days and he told me we are no longer teammates. We are now representing our countries. He is a great leader, both on the Astros and the Puerto Rican team. He is a great player. He improves the performance of his team. Puerto Rico is a great team. We know that.

Q. I would like to ask you, you have been in both World Classics. What are the differences in the Venezuelan team comparing both Classics?

JOSE ALTUVE: Different players to different generations, Ronald Acuña, Giménez again. Two of the best players in the Big Leagues and they are very young. The previous Classic was six years ago. We have great relationships among us, good chemistry. The team, they're all willing to win, to go out to the field, and do their best. There are no egos. We talk about winning and to me this could be the key.

Q. You hit two home runs in the practice games. Is that important for you to get to this tournament with this performance?

JOSE ALTUVE: I expect to continue like that. I want to help my team. We are playing a very difficult group, but we know who we have in the clubhouse. We also have Miguel, a great leader who is keeping all of us on track and we know things will not be easier, but we can do things better.

Q. Luis García and you know Omar Lopez as your first base coach. That link, that relationship, how do you see that? How does that impact help bringing Omar's message to the other teammates?

JOSE ALTUVE: Speaking about Luis, he's going to be a pitcher that can make a difference in this tournament. He is very important for the Astros, and he is very important for this team.

And Omar is the best for that job. Someone who gives everything he has. He is a professional, and he is focused on win, and we want to win for him and for our country.