

# World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Dominican Republic vs Venezuela

Friday, 10 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

## Team Venezuela

### Omar López

#### Workout Day Press Conference

**Q. Good afternoon, Omar. Today starts with bad news. Ranger Suárez's injury. Can you talk about the decision to add Briceno on the roster and to start Martin tomorrow.**

OMAR LÓPEZ: First of all, I thank you for your time, for your presence here. What can I say? Things that happen in our lives, in baseball, and somehow we have to turn the page. Ranger will not be able to be part of us, but this is part of the game, injuries and things that we cannot control. And the best thing for him is to go back to Spring Training and get ready for the season.

We're going to miss him, of course, but for more than five months we have been working and preparing for this kind of situation that we might face, and having plan B or plan C.

We have some pitchers that haven't pitched in Venezuela for one or two years, and somehow they kept playing. According to the experience from previous Classics, the depth that we might have in the area of relievers, we have very good starting pitchers, but as relievers, we don't have many. So we started to scout some pitchers, and we found Endrys Briceno. He is healthy. He was playing in an independent league. Then he went to play in Puerto Rico.

He played in 2022. Maybe he could be signed by Arizona. He was scouted by a friend of mine, a pitching scout. We talked about him. We followed up, and we received his information, and we made the decision because we have been watching him, observing him. So that helped us to make that decision.

**Q. And why Martin versus the Dominican Republic?**

OMAR LÓPEZ: Martin -- not only Martin, by the way. All the starting pitchers are in good shape. They follow their pitching program. Martin was great to me for the first



game. He has all the tools in order to neutralize some hitters, and he is able to compete and pitch for three or four innings to get that limit of 65 pitches.

We have other pitchers, but they belong to their rotations in their teams, and they didn't have time. That would complicate our rotation.

**Q. Considering that, are you ready to say officially the rest of the rotation for the first round?**

OMAR LÓPEZ: Well, Martin is starting tomorrow. Pablo López the day after versus Puerto Rico. That's what I can say now. I cannot say anything about the lineup. Not yet.

**Q. I think you said that you had Martin Pérez starting tomorrow and Pablo on Sunday. Who is starting the last two games?**

OMAR LÓPEZ: We don't know yet. We don't know yet. If you guys look into our practice today, Luzardo is not with us today. He is making his outing with the Marlins in their complex, and we have to wait and see how he is doing, how is everything? It's kind of the same situation that happened with Ranger Suárez. We're waiting until the last second. We have a deadline to make the decision and also to make the announcement.

**Q. Rodney Linares said this week for the DR, anything that is not the title, that would be a failure. Do you see is the same way? Yes? No? Why?**

OMAR LÓPEZ: No, I don't see it like that. I'm focused on this. Again, we've been working for five, six months. We tried to make the best possible plan with all the details providing a good atmosphere for the players, so they can go out and fight for their dream to make their country happy.

If things go wrong, it's because that's God's will. We cannot be frustrated about that, and that's the main goal.

**Q. In the two practice games I had a feeling that, you could say if I'm right or not, the teams is well equipped emotionally, but maybe not from the sports point of view, but they are united around Miguel Cabrera. How**



**could you describe that?**

OMAR LÓPEZ: That was one of the goals we had to find a way to fight not only the country when we put together the team. We are not only here to compete. We are going to try to win games, but we wanted to give Venezuela happiness, you know, to celebrate together.

At the same time we have a future Hall of Famer, and he should be the inspiration. It's mandatory for us to give the best to Miguel Cabrera. Based on that, I dedicated myself to plan the team and to take care of the logistics, operations together with him.

Working with Miguel, we started working for months. We wanted the players to know that he was doing his best, that we had his firm commitment, that he would support them. And he needed them as well for different reasons. I'm not going to give details. He is already with us. He is going to play with us. And we created that group, that team. They know that our captain is an inspiration, and we want to do our best for him. It depends on us. We are the ones that are going to fight and to get each victory.

**Q. For Venezuela, he is a historic captain. Two questions on that: Your players have said that he is the leader for the team. What has he done? Helping with the roster, or inviting the team to go out for dinner, or what has he done?**

OMAR LÓPEZ: He is not like a leader. He is the "the" leader. Just, like, someone stands up and speak up, everyone open their eyes, and we have to listen to him.

What has he done? This same vision that I have to be transparent and say what is happening.

There is no player from the previous Classics. This was homework that I did. I investigated what happened, how was the atmosphere in 2006, 2009, and in the following Classics? What happened? What happened in 2009? I talked to Marco Scutaro. I was called by other players, and they told me what they did, what happened, giving me ideas of how to do things.

I talked to Miguel. And he said, well, the problem, Omar, is that there is a problem of commitment to identify yourself with a baseball, with a country.

And I told him, I have several ideas to do that. It was very simple. We called the players: Are you willing to do that, yes or no?

If we realized that there was a doubt, we skipped that player and talked to the next one because everyone has a

different situations in their teams. Many of them couldn't come to the team, but others have different attitudes.

And Miguel came in. He called the players. We talked to them. We say, we do this all together or we don't do it. If someone want to come with us, okay. If you don't want to be with us, go out because we cannot have doubts about this.

We have the ego box. Everyone has to take their ego out and to put it in that box. We are going to have two weeks to enjoy. We have to have fun here. Good memories are those moments that we leave as families.

**Q. It might be your last year in the Majors. What does that represent for the baseball in your country?**

OMAR LÓPEZ: I am part of this history with him, and I want to help Miguel so that he has good memories. To me this is very important. Being part of that history for him is very satisfying for me.

I hope to leave a good legacy for him so that he remembers me and the coaching staff is having fun in this World Classic, and we might give him and Venezuela the title.

**Q. Classic after Classic Venezuela has had great teams, talented players. However, the history of our country in this event is terrible. Our best performance was in 2009, and we made it only to the second round. Is there something different in the previous Classics, something that could help us in this edition of 2023?**

OMAR LÓPEZ: Baseball depends on execution, depends on preparation, and depends on other factors. Even luck.

But the most important thing in a baseball team is the unity. How we engage, how to create this atmosphere so the players can understand themselves and to show this on the field and off the field. Once again, I cannot do the work by myself, and I didn't.

And today we have a different team. Being close to us, to the team, in the last couple of weeks, and I couldn't believe the first day that we were so united. There was possibility that they have taken the commitment that they have in terms of the planning and the agenda that I set for them tells a lot. They are committed to do their best.

I hope that this hard job, the hard work that we have done can lead to a good accomplishment and results for the country on the field. I just like that people identify themselves, that you can see that Venezuela did their best on the field no matter the results. Thank you very much for

your time.

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