

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Dominican Republic vs Venezuela

Saturday, 11 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Venezuela

Pablo Lopez

Pregame Press Conference

Q. This is like a homecoming pitching in Miami. This is a ballpark that you know a lot. Can you tell us how special this ballpark could be for a pitcher to face the Dominican team?

PABLO LOPEZ: This is the ballpark where I made my debut five years ago. I played with the Miami Marlins for five years, for five seasons. I'm very grateful for that, and I'm familiar with the mound, with the environment, with the park.

It is great to pitch here and facing Puerto Rico, I believe that the fact that I'm familiar with the environment gives me some advantage that I will take.

It is a lineup that is very potent, and I have to be focused on it, making pitches, making sure that I have to be confident in my identity and my skills as a pitcher. I don't have to change my plan. I just have to be on the mound focused on my goal on making my pitches and to try to will my team victory.

Q. Pablo, how many times as a little child did you dream of a moment like this, and how emotional will you be when you hear the Venezuelan national anthem?

PABLO LOPEZ: I dreamt of this many, many times. When I was 8 I played in Cartagena Venezuela, and now the feeling should be multiplied by 1,000 because representing Venezuela in the most important event of baseball makes me proud. I will never forget this. Every day that I come to the clubhouse with this team of stars, of players, it's a dream come true.

Just trying to enjoy this moment, to have fun at the same time knowing that we have a purpose, a goal, and the goal is that we as a team, everyone can contribute to play game after game, pitch after pitch.



Q. What did Alcantara tell you that you about not facing him today? What did you see from Puerto Rico today? Omar told us that they couldn't watch the game in the hotel. Did you watch the game?

PABLO LOPEZ: I would pitch the second game. I haven't been able to talk to Sandy because he is focused on today's game, but I told him that against the Dominican Republic, we would be playing as opponents. He is very good at attacking the strike zone. So today it's going to be very strong, aggressive with a lot of adrenaline, and we are going to enjoy it. We are going to have fun.

What was the second part of your question?

Q. If you watched Puerto Rico today.

PABLO LOPEZ: Yeah, I had to download an app to watch the game, and it was a trial for 30 minutes only, and I had a log-in with DirecTV.

It's a lineup with great players. Lindor, Francisco Lindor, I think he is the player that I have faced the most. Sometimes I was successful. Sometimes he was successful. So I have a long history with Lindor, and he will let his teammates know his experiences against me, and I will try to use what I saw last year and to make some adjustments according to the situation in the game.

Q. Pablo, Omar said that Miguel couldn't play today, but he would be tomorrow in the lineup versus Puerto Rico. What is the meaning of playing together with Miguel Cabrera? How has been the experience of living together with Cabrera, sharing with Miguel Cabrera these days?

PABLO LOPEZ: It's been great. Miguel Cabrera has done many, many things for the Venezuelan players, such as myself. He motivated us. He inspired us. He gave us a purpose for which to play.

If we made it, we have everything that we need to make it. Only when we understand the values from the family, from home. Remember the roots, our roots, and the fact of being on the same team to wear the same jersey is



something that it's difficult for me to explain. He's the star in the locker room that has achieved so many things. He is going to be a Hall of Famer, and he is playing this year with that feeling. That would be great, right?

It's been much better than what I thought. He talks to everyone. He tells us that even when he doesn't play, he will be there for us, supporting us. Even when he is not in the lineup, he provides us extra motivation.

Q. Two things: Venezuela might be the team with the most difficult schedule because you are facing Dominican Republic today, and tomorrow you are facing Puerto Rico. It's a very tough situation. How do you see that as a team? You have a very strong lineup. What do you say internally because everyone talks about the Dominican Republic. Not only beating you, but also the champions in this tournament?

PABLO LOPEZ: Yes, the schedule is tough. The first game versus the Dominican Republic. The second one versus Puerto Rico. But in the world of sports, in the world of baseball we like challenges. We like to face that kind of challenge, and we all have what we need to perform.

This is something that we can use as fuel, as motivation. If this is the start of this tournament, one-two, then the third and the fourth games we'll be able to play them with more confidence. We are playing with the best teams in the tournament.

So in my eyes this is not negative. This is positive. Something we can capitalize on. These are games with high intensity, high adrenaline, but we see this as an opportunity. Saying that Venezuela is quiet and stuff, no, we are in the locker, in the clubhouse knowing that we have a goal, that we understand what we want to achieve and how, no matter if we are favored, if we are not as strong as other teams. On paper we have very well-balanced pitching rotation.

We should be confident. If we make sure that we are not only playing for us, but for our teammates, for the fans that are home and seeing us, we have great chances to do something very special.

Thank you.

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