

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

Saturday, 11 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

## Team Venezuela

### Omar Lopez

#### Postgame Press Conference

Venezuela 5, Dominican Republic 1

**Q. Omar, first of all, congratulations. First victory for Venezuela in a World Baseball Classic.**

OMAR LOPEZ: Thank you.

**Q. In the press conference in West Palm Beach we asked you about Luis García, and when will he go? You said he will go. This was ace for today because his relief was out of this world.**

OMAR LOPEZ: At the beginning I had foreseen him for Puerto Rico. Checking our system with the analytics and the possible lineup of Puerto Rico, I wanted more the combination of the left-hander with the Dominican Republic.

After that I talked to one of our pitching coaches. We went over our analytics, and he was a match for the Dominican Republic. Thank God we were able to prepare him. The Astros actually prepared him against the Dominican Republic to be that reliever together with Perez that was able to dominate the powerful offense of the DR.

**Q. Not just the thoughts about the first victory DR and starting off on the right foot. Can you speak a little bit more about the pitching plan. Not only Luis, but you had the recipe for the left-handers. What did you see in the DR lineup that was hurting them?**

OMAR LOPEZ: The Dominican team, the whole roster, and especially the lineup of today, it's a very powerful team. And if I were asked who I should take care of, I would say Soto, Devers, and maybe a third one from today, Manny Machado. Those three guys.

Devers and Juan Soto, we pitched them in a way that he made contact, especially after two strikes it, but we pitched



in his zone. If we had kept the change-ups and the other pitches lower in the zone, we would have been more successful. In the case of Devers it was the same.

It all depends on the execution, and we were successful thanks to a great execution.

**Q. Omar, what was the discussion you had, if you had a discussion, with Martin Pérez after that first inning where he was battled, the Dominican Republic scored first. What advice did you give him?**

OMAR LOPEZ: No, there was no conversation, no advice. I just let the pitchers be. That's why we have a pitching coach.

I talked to Martin after his third inning. He was pitching a little higher. Maybe he was tired. It was very wet or humid on the field, and he still had some pitches to go. I saw his face, and he told me, forget about this, I can move forward. Meaning that he was tired, a little tired.

I got Ruiz warming up, he is a good matchup with the other hitters, and things worked out.

**Q. What was it like for you to watch the matchups unfold between Peña and Luis and then Neris and Altuve?**

OMAR LOPEZ: Crazy. You know, it was exciting. It was exciting and crazy, and then I was very, very scared when Neris threw those first two pitches almost over Altuve's head.

But it was fun to watch those guys, you know, on the other side, and also this morning at the hotel too. It's been fun, and I hope we continue this tournament, this WBC having fun with each other. Both teams have a great team, and I think those two guys will do a good job too.

**Q. In the second inning, bases loaded, and Martin was able to get out of the jam. What did you discover in your team? Something new in terms of the ability to respond?**

OMAR LOPEZ: That's a great question because someone



asked me that question before the tournament because the first game was versus the DR, and they told me if I were feeling nervous or afraid because I was facing the DR.

I said, well, that's where we are going to see what is Venezuela made of. The first two games will be against two powerful teams in Latin America, the DR and Puerto Rico.

And we did our best, and we got a victory.

**Q. How do you prepare the team to face this powerful lineup? And, number two, probably you will be the last manager in the WBC for Miguel Cabrera. What are your thoughts in that regard?**

OMAR LOPEZ: First of all, thank you. We have been preparing ourselves for several months for each opponent. We were in West Palm Beach together. We have been meeting for three days using all the resources of the coaches and the team, the analytics, going over video. We can prepare a specific report, and we discussed a lot. We talked a lot. We have been dedicating time.

I told the players and the coaches, we have to have fun. I'm sorry because I'm speaking too much, but this is for you to have an idea of how we are dealing with the team.

Now, about the World Classic in the past, you come here to have fun, but they didn't work. Something is to wear the jersey, and something different is to represent our country. We're having fun, but we are working. Our families are here. They might go shopping, but we have to work, to have meetings. We have to watch film, and this is the way we prepared ourselves for the DR.

We were able to understand his pitches. We didn't miss that opportunity, and this is baseball when you face this kind of pitcher.

Now concerning Miguel Cabrera, this was maybe the main reason for me to involve Miguel in putting together this team and working with it. To me in 20, 25 years my children, my grandchildren could say, my dad or my grandpa was a manager of Miguel Cabrera. This would be a great legacy for me, and this is an honor for me as well.

**Q. We know that the Astros have a great team, and you are part of that. Great players in both teams that were facing face to face. Altuve against Neris. García versus Peña. Is that positive or negative for both teams? I mean, how well they know each other because they play together in the Big Leagues, especially in the Astros.**

RODNEY LINARES: Before coming here, they were together every day. They were speak all the time, making jokes about the team, and here we are. It's a brotherhood. It's a brotherhood that we have, and we are developing. In Puerto Rico you have Maldonado, for example. We have people in other countries as well. This brotherhood has helped the Astros be successful in the last two or three years.

**Q. When we were in batting practice, you said that Santander had taken 60 at-bats. Today he hit a triple, home run and great catch in the centerfield. What can you say about him?**

OMAR LOPEZ: As you know, when he told me about the number of at-bats times that he had, I thought, well, he is good.

But he was trying to make some adjustment instead of looking for results, and we spoke about that today. I saw Peralta taking good swing. So I then thought about putting Peralta and both Santander in the lineup. As we used to say, I was trying to use my instincts to get all those good swings to the plate. Then I spoke with him with Santander as part of our strategy. It was a matchup based on the roster. But he played very well, and the catch in centerfield, plus other plays with Martin, et cetera, these were key plays in the game.

**Q. My question, Omar, I would like to ask you about Salvador Perez. Pitching was very good, but his performance, I want to know a little bit more about his performance.**

OMAR LOPEZ: Salvador, starting last year when we faced him, he told me, you are going to be the manager of the national team. Put the team together the way you like, and let us just play ball. I'm going to prepare myself this offseason. I'm going to bring scouting reports because this is our year. Leave this to me with Chirinos, Narvaez. We're going to do a great job.

And he is a key piece on our team. He is the oil of the team, you know, and he is leading this team on and off the field.

Thank you. Good night.

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