

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Venezuela vs Puerto Rico

Sunday, 12 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Venezuela

Eduardo Rodriguez

Ronald Acuña

Pregame Press Conference



Q. Acuña, which Ronald Acuña are we going to see today versus Puerto Rico, and how is the team feeling after the victory yesterday?

RONALD ACUÑA: We are all on the same page. We are united. You will see the same Ronald Acuña that you are used to seeing. Yesterday we won, but today it's a new day. Today it's a different game.

Q. Ronald, two questions: Number one, you were one of the first last year, you tweeted a picture of the team saying "wishing to be here." What was your commitment to be here? What did you have to do in order to convince the Atlanta Braves to authorize you to come here? Number two, you had to deal with some public stuff on social media. How difficult has it been for you to deal with that? What have you done in order to deal with those situations?

RONALD ACUÑA: Yes, I was one of the first guys saying, yes, that I wanted to be in the Classic. It's a dream come true playing with my teammates.

And about social networks, I don't live on social media. I am myself, and that's it.

Q. Eduardo, you have pitched very well in Spring Training. You have done a very good job in the first game. How are you feeling for the game versus Nicaragua?

EDUARDO RODRIGUEZ: I prepared myself in the preseason. We had the opportunity to participate in the Classic, I'm feeling very well. I worked on my pitches, and I'm playing at a very high level, so I'm ready to pitch on Monday.

Q. Ronald, Omar just said that he made this change in

the lineup because he realized you were a little anxious and that he talked to you. Can you make a comment on that? Do you feel that today's team is easier than yesterday's?

RONALD ACUÑA: No, there are no easy games.

Yes, I was anxious, a lot of adrenaline. I always want to do my best, but personally speaking, things didn't go the way I wanted, but the point is that we won.

Q. You have dealt with a lot, injury, the situation last year. What do you think the meaning of being here, not only playing, but knowing everything that you overcame to be at the highest level and being with the national team?

EDUARDO RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I underwent knee surgery. Participating in this Classic, it meant a lot to me playing with these teammates that are fantastic. To me it's great to be here.

Q. A follow-up question: Tomorrow you will pitch, but you have seen Miguel in the lineup. You played together in Detroit. This could be his last season.

EDUARDO RODRIGUEZ: I've know him for many, many years. We train together. I played with him last year. I saw when he got his 3,000 hit. I'm very proud of that. Having the opportunity to play with him this year, his last year in the Majors, is something very special. And being together with him in the Classic representing our country together, that's beautiful, and I'm going to enjoy every at-bat, every home appearance because this is going to be his last game with Venezuela.

Q. You have some teammates on the Puerto Rican team. Acuña, have you talked to Eddie? Eduardo, have you talked to Javy? Can you make an analysis about Puerto Rico because the manager said that yesterday the game was like a Latin American World Series.

RONALD ACUÑA: The game today could be very difficult, like yesterday's, with a lot of adrenaline. It's a healthy rivalry. We have great chemistry. We both have great



teams, but I hope we win.

EDUARDO RODRIGUEZ: Last year I had the chance to play with Javy, but I know many Boricuas. We are together, and we speak all the time. We wished each other the best of luck because when we go out to the field, we represent our countries. We are rivals, but after the game, we are all teammates and friends again.

Q. Ronald, truly, truly, truly, what is the meaning for you to wear Venezuela's uniform? You have an unfortunate history with this ballpark, but now you are playing center field. Is there a major difference between covering right field and centerfield in loanDepot Park?

RONALD ACUÑA: What can I say? Wearing my country's jersey means everything to me. You are representing your friends, your family, your culture.

What happened in the past is in the past. If you play, of course, you can get an injury, and the difference between right field and centerfield to me is more difficult than in left field, but it's the same thing for me playing in any of those positions.

Q. Eduardo, the pitchers playing in the Majors are used to pitching in March, but not to compete in March. Considering you're pitching on Tuesday, how was your preparation before joining the Detroit Tigers?

EDUARDO RODRIGUEZ: Well, it was usual and normal preparation. I just started to pitch a little earlier to be ready and to be 100 percent for the Classic. I played in the three games in the Spring Training. My pitching was okay. My body was okay. I was feeling well.

That was the preparation. I just started earlier for the preseason.

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