

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Venezuela vs Puerto Rico

Sunday, 12 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Venezuela

Omar Lopez

Postgame Press Conference

Venezuela 9, Puerto Rico 6

Q. A quick question about Pablo Lopez in that fifth inning. He got two outs. Is there a specific reason for which you didn't let him finish that inning? Was it just for him to get an ovation from the crowd?

OMAR LOPEZ: Yes, it was good. It's 65 pitches according to restrictions, but 65 equals 60, because I don't want an at-bat and he might surpass that amount of pitches, and I might receive a call tomorrow.

We are playing the Classic. We are trying to do the right thing. I have always met the requirements of any organizations. I'm not going to break it. The country is important, but they are important as well.

Q. It's always important to win, of course, but maybe you didn't have your best bullpen available. Quijada, Alvarado didn't get the 30 pitches. You could have used them. Were you trying to finish the game with people that didn't pitch yesterday. Number two, when Salvador Perez was taken for Narvaez, what was the purpose of that? Just wanted to give him some rest or what?

OMAR LOPEZ: The bullpen was available. They worked a lot yesterday, and to me they were the last options. I didn't want to force them. I didn't want them to pitch back to back. I tried to take into consideration the time, the day, you know, like Spring Training. So that they acquire their very best ability to be ready and the ability to pitch back to back.

We were in the last part of the game, but Silvino came out. Silvino hadn't pitched, and we know his ability to do that job.

Salvador is okay, but it's more of the same. It was his first time this spring catching back to backs. And we



coordinated this, according to the situation of the game in the fifth or sixth inning. I wanted to substitute him and give an opportunity to Narvaez because he is going to start versus Nicaragua. That was a plan that was coordinated. Salvador agreed with me, but then he didn't want to leave. But I talked to him, and I told him, this was our agreement. I'm not going to change what we agreed upon.

It's something not typical, but I take the risk. I'm responsible, and things went well.

Q. Two quick questions: You just said that everyone was available in the bullpen, but you said that some pitchers have some restrictions to pitch back to back. Who? Can you specify?

OMAR LOPEZ: I cannot give you names because that would be an advantage for the other teams. The restrictions not to pitch back to back was according to the amount or number of pitches.

Q. Question number two, what did you think about Pablo? He was spectacular.

OMAR LOPEZ: That's what Pablo does in the Majors, throws strikes, mixes his pitches. He gave us almost five innings. Very useful at the time with the score.

Q. Your offense, many say that maybe they played real baseball in their country. That's a plus and added value compared to other people that say that that's why the Dominican Republic didn't have the offense everyone expected. Do you think that that offense is because they were active in the national league in Venezuela?

OMAR LOPEZ: When you speak of the Dominican Republic, I don't know what kind of job they developed, but one of the messages that I passed on to the team, is that we started monitoring things since approximately November. We started monitoring the kind of job they were doing, and I told them, you have to prepare yourself. You get to Spring Training at a 70 percent, use the other 35 or 40 days to reach the 100 percent of your skills and ability.

If you are willing to represent Venezuela, you should reach from 85 to 90 percent of your ability to be part of this team, and that's what we expected until the very last day to name the team. If I saw someone that was not able or not prepared enough, I wouldn't call him to the roster.

We had three or four positions or options for each position. The coaches were doing the tracking. We watched some videos, and then we selected the players. Everyone was very well prepared because they are committed to the team and to the country.

Q. When the schedule was announced of Pool D, the pool of death, with this important and solid teams, if Venezuela got 2-0 or 0-2 in the first two games, I mean, with two victories, they or you have one foot in the second round. Tell me about that inning that killed the Boricua's inspiration.

OMAR LOPEZ: We feel okay. We are humble with each victory. I can highlight that. Some people didn't believe in our team. They said that we'd get eliminated. Even in our own country people were criticizing me, but that's part of life, part of what we live, and that's why I wanted more and more to get to work, and spend time with my wife and with my children. I wanted to be dedicated 100 percent and to show that we can do a great job. We feel okay. We are humble. That's the way I told the guys yesterday.

It's our day of tomorrow. We are going to have a meeting to speak about Nicaragua. We're going to have practice. There is no rest. The guys are committed, and they want to win.

Q. Silvino, tell me about Silvino.

OMAR LOPEZ: He saved us. I haven't seen this from Silvino since Venezuela in the final with the Aguilas back home. This World Series of the last couple of days, this Latin American World Series confirms that sometimes you should put the people that are more experienced on the mound. Of course, respecting the other pitchers that we have available.

However, at that point in time it is key, and that's where Silvino has been working for so many years. I trust him. He is the guy, the perfect guy for that moment. He came to throw. He came to pitch, and that's why he was so successful in that inning.

Q. A follow-up on taking Salvy out of the game in the sixth inning. How do you think it affected the Puerto Rican bats, especially taking out a veteran that's calling the pitches, calling the game for you guys?

OMAR LOPEZ: Yeah, it might affect a little bit the whole plan. I know that, but we talked about it before. We talked about it today, and that is something that I talked to Omar -- the other Omar. I say the other Omar. I said, you know, keep your eyes on the game, you know, the plan, how Salvy is doing it. So you continue with the rest of the game with the pitching plan.

I think, honestly, Machado and Chacin made great pitches. They just put the barrel, and they were able to put the ball where nobody was playing. I think a couple of defensive plays that we didn't make behind them, and that's a part of the game. Otherwise, they did a good job too.

Q. Omar, you have spoken about two games for Miguel Cabrera. He played today. What would be the second game? Have you thought about paying some tribute to Miguel Cabrera?

OMAR LOPEZ: Yes, we have discussed about that. I'm going to give you details later on, but with Miguel, I wanted to put him to play versus Nicaragua.

I might change my opinion, but this is the plan that we have so far.

Q. Puerto Rico fought but didn't make it. What impression do you have? What thoughts do you have about Puerto Rico? They fought and you faced Dominican Republic already and Puerto Rico. Any ideas about the game between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic?

OMAR LOPEZ: No games will be easy with those teams. No one will give up. If you make a mistake, they will capitalize on that. They have shown what they are made of in all the Classics. They have a tradition of Team Rubio, and we have to respect them. There are no lesser opponents. We have to try to respect them. We have to respect them to play inning after inning, game after game. They always kept their heads up.

It was a surprise for them when we started, yes, but after that, they changed their mindset and they fought back. I'm expecting a beautiful game against both teams, and we're going to have another party at the Marlins Park. They will do their job, and they will try to win the game.

Actually, the party continues in Miami. Thank you. Good night.

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