

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

Tuesday, 14 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

## Team Dominican Republic

### Rodney Linares

#### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Good afternoon, Rodney. I have to ask you this question: Did anything change or did you get the permission for Soto to play?**

RODNEY LINARES: I knew that you were asking that. Yes. We talked to them today in the morning. Ben, his trainer, is here. He is monitoring us. You have seen Soto running. Every time he was at bat, he felt well. There were no problems. Today in the morning he was feeling well. We still had the plan for him not to play today. We talked to him. He was willing to play, as you know.

But I'm laughing. It's great to have him in the lineup.

**Q. Will he be in the lineup against Puerto Rico on Wednesday or you haven't defined that yet?**

RODNEY LINARES: I believe that the plan is that he is able to play as long as he is healthy. Juan will be playing all the way.

You have seen the statement of the manager. We talked to the manager today in the morning. The lineup was announced later because of the time difference. We talked to him, and he said that it all depended on how Juan feels. He said, you can count on me. Let's go for it.

**Q. Rodney, how difficult is it for you to manage this team? You have managers in the crowd, among the fans, and everything is criticized even when you win.**

RODNEY LINARES: Once again, I don't listen to those voices, but it's been difficult because of the restrictions. It's been difficult to come here to Miami, and they want to know if they cannot play in the field. It's been difficult, the communication with other teams.

They say something. Tomorrow they say something different. I understand that, but we will try our best in order to give the best product. I want everyone to be fresh, and



everyone should be participating on the team. We're going to select the best possible team.

**Q. With the victory of Venezuela today, the game between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic is a matter of survival. Considering the rivalry as well, what is the message to your team?**

RODNEY LINARES: It was said in the practice, when we had the practice on the day off after the loss, and I talked to the infielders and outfielders. I didn't talk to the pitchers. We have been practicing in different stages, and the message was clear, it was so win one game at a time. We have to beat Israel first before thinking about Puerto Rico. We have to win today, and then we think about Puerto Rico tomorrow.

**Q. The plan for today, considering Contreras, is there a restriction in terms of the number of innings he can pitch?**

RODNEY LINARES: Roansy, as many young players, he has many restrictions as far as pitches and innings, like many young players. The same goes for Ortiz. He is on the roster because of that because he is able to pitch multiple innings. Knowing that if we don't need the best pitchers, we won't use them today. We will use them tomorrow.

**Q. Yesterday Yadi Molina defined the game versus the Dominican Republic as the most important in the tournament. Do you consider this game as well?**

RODNEY LINARES: Of course. If we lose, we don't move to the next round. It is going to be the best or the most important game, considering the rivalry against Puerto Rico, the good players they have. I said that before.

There are no easy games. We played Team Venezuela that was very well prepared. The game versus Nicaragua yesterday was great. I have to congratulate them, and we are expecting the same for today's game versus Israel. We'll try to win today, and then we'll play Puerto Rico tomorrow.

**Q. We have seen a tie in Pool A, for example. Cuba**

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**qualified even when they lost the first two games. Puerto Rico has a loss, but in that game scored six runs. Is there a plan for the offense so that you have a wide or a big lead?**

RODNEY LINARES: First of all, we have to win the game. Number two, there is some confusion in terms of the rules of runs and how the math works for that. First of all, we have to win today, as simple as that. If we lose today, we have to beat Puerto Rico. If there is a tie and Israel lost, hypothetically speaking, it would be a head to head versus Puerto Rico. Otherwise, the criteria would be the number of runs allowed and the run difference.

So it's very complicated math. It's very different from the one they put on television that you have to score 22 rounds or 15 runs, but it's important to score runs. In this kind of tournament, you don't have to play all the innings and you will have more time to rest in the case of an early termination.

**Q. Nelson Cruz has been great in the preseason games. We all know how that beast works. Why haven't you used him in the lineup?**

RODNEY LINARES: His role on the team is to come to the bench as a pinch-hitter against a good left-hander. We don't have a lot of information about the starting pitcher from Israel. We thought that it was better to keep him on the bench. Like I said from the very beginning, everyone on the team has a role. You know? Nelson understands that. I haven't had problems with him about that.

Many people from the very beginning said, Nelson is going to tell you this, Nelson is going to be offended. But, no, that's a good message that there is no ego, and we just want to win.

**Q. Good afternoon. Same question about Nelson. He knew that the situation was very difficult, but Jean, is he going to play today and Robinson? What plans do you have for them? Because you have said that you want all the players to participate and to play.**

RODNEY LINARES: We are kind of tied because of the game versus Venezuela, the first game. Losing that game ties your hands, you know? We don't have the flexibility of using all the players.

I just want to put out the best possible team. I'm not minimizing the players. I have said that from the very beginning. They are all superstars. I'm dealing with a group of 30 players that are the best in the Majors, and I can only put nine out there. We are trying to maximize that opportunity.

For example, Mejia can not catch back to back. He is still in Spring Training. The organization is going to call me, and they will say, no. That's why I'm splitting duties between him and Gary.

Nelson, Robinson, Jean, and the others, they have a role on the team. I have talked to some of them personally about this situation. It's a very short tournament, you know? It could be four games or seven games, and that's why we have to maximize and to win the most games.

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