

# World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Venezuela vs Israel

Wednesday, 15 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

## Team Venezuela

### Omar Lopez

#### Postgame Press Conference

Venezuela - 5, Israel - 1

**Q. For a long time you spoke about Luzardo and his commitment and everything that you did in order to bring him, and it was very special to see him and to see his performance.**

OMAR LOPEZ: It was a team effort. I'm very proud of his dedication and the commitment it took with the national team from the very beginning, and fought for this authorization for him to have the opportunity to pitch for Venezuela and he did it in a fantastic way. He was blessed. We hope to count on him and to see him shining in the Majors as well.

**Q. Congrats. For the very first time in a WBC, Venezuela qualified and was undefeated, and that's a great achievement for the country. The question is, what did you speak with about Acuña? You said before the game that you would be speaking with him because something changed today in his approach and his patience at the plate.**

OMAR LOPEZ: Yes, I talked to him and I told him that I had watched some film and I could see his strengths, and he was not using it. He was doing things that he shouldn't be doing. He was batting fifth not to take pressure off him but it was just a strategy to give opportunity to other players. I wanted them to participate. I didn't want him to panic or that I expected less from him. I'm going to try to be fair with him and be as transparent as I can with him.

I told him, use your strengths. Try to hit to the other side of the field. You're always ahead in the count, you can react after some strikes. Stick to your strengths, your power in order to get your performance back. And he was better today. Of course I want him to double, to triple, to steal bases, etc. But I told him, try to get the positive things out of the negative. He drove in a run, he stole a base, a great play and that's what I could see, positives in him.



**Q. Now the focus is the Canada, the U.S. or Mexico. What can you say about those teams?**

OMAR LOPEZ: Well, we will continue preparing tomorrow. We're going to have another meeting. We're going to wait today to see the team we're going to face and that way we're going to prepare ourselves. We have some scouting reports, we have the data of each team. Every coach has a great responsibility. They have to study that information and when we had the meeting with the coaches, we'll be starting to prepare what we are going to speak about with the players. Maybe tonight or tomorrow, I don't know because many things could be defined with Mexico's game. We're going to send some film to the players of the possible pitchers we might face.

At the beginning it was a challenge for all of us and I'm going to speak a little bit more. We didn't know how our players would embrace the game plan we implemented. They bought in and they're okay. I was surprised in the meetings because it is not only one or two that checked the links, everyone did it. And that it's a great support for the game plan for the next game.

**Q. In the previous four editions of the Classic Venezuela had a very competitive roster, but they couldn't fulfill the expectations. In this Classic you did everything well. Are the players more committed or engaged in order to meet those expectations and overcome the performance of the previous editions?**

OMAR LOPEZ: Something happened in the clubhouse recently. This is a very relevant question. Four months ago or so I told Miguel Cabrera that I wanted to put together a special team with his support, with his help. A while ago he told me that he thought that we could do it the way we did it, not only Lopez, but all of them told me that. And the key in my opinion was not only Omar Lopez, not only Omar Lopez -- hey man, I'm trying to answer a question.

EDUARDO ESCOBAR: You need help?

OMAR LOPEZ: No, I don't need help.



So that's every day. This guy talking to me and I tell him,  
Your English is so bad (laughter.)

Anyway, I was saying that that just happened and it was not only me, all of 'em. Not because they joined us in the room, but everyone has contributed based on the communication and the dedication of everyone to be successful.

I cannot speak about the previous teams, I was present on the latest one and there was no cohesion in many areas. And I wrote it down on my project since 2017, if I had the opportunity -- I had the opportunity, I interviewed players and I said several things in those interviews, and I said that if I were the manager of the national team, I don't want to be a dictator, but I said we have to do things this way, otherwise don't count on me.

**Q. In all of the games Venezuela started with a big league starter or a solid pitcher, a good prospect that is coming up. How important was that in everything that happened in the first round, having that kind of talent in the pitching rotation?**

OMAR LOPEZ: The pitchers that everyone knows and they are solid in their careers. Some other people couldn't come to the team. That's why we have to recognize the people that are behind this wall, people that you never know, they don't come to the interviews, which is Yañez. He's Venezuelan. He works for the Minnesota Twins. He's great as a scout. A scout that knows all the players. He has a great database of Venezuelan players, and when the time came that you have a plan A because of the starters and you have one or two choices, he had a list number two, a list number three.

So when he investigated, for example, the roster of team Israel with so many left-handed batters, they told me, take a look at his database. I believe in him, he's one of our best scouts. I think he's number one in the U.S.

Thank you for your time. Thank you.

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