

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Puerto Rico vs Dominican Republic

Wednesday, 15 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Puerto Rico

Kiké Hernández

Postgame Press Conference

Q. What's the locker room right now feel like, look like, sound like?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: Quiet. I mean, it comes to a certain point that it gets bigger than the game and there's something very unfortunate happened, and as excited as we were about the game and all that, it's one of our brothers and some of us grew up together and all that.

So it's real easy to set aside the game and worry about us as humans. So it definitely doesn't feel in there like we just beat the Dominican Republic to advance.

Q. How difficult, how painful is it to be celebrating (cell phone ringing.)

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: I call you later, we are in an interview. What was your question? Yes, how painful, how difficult.

Q. How painful, how difficult is it that you get the victory, the fans are happy, and suddenly the teammate is injured. How can you digest this kind of situation?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: It's hard. We were with high energy. I didn't know what was going on, I was in the outfield. I celebrated with Eddie and when we got to the infield, we realized what was going on and I don't know exactly what happened.

We got a great victory on the field. On paper maybe they had a better team than ours, but we played better. We made it. We connected great hits with people on bases, good defense. We advanced and we were able to beat the Dominican Republic.

Q. Speak about this victory. Puerto Rico advances to the next round. The performance of some of the guys



was perfect.

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: The bullpen, it was a bullpen game today. And they did a fantastic job. The Dominican lineup is maybe one of the best that we have seen in history of baseball. Only two runs, only two hits. This is something extremely unique. We had good defense, we played small ball. Machete played a great job behind home plate. One of the best hitters, by the way, even bunting, he connected hits. And also Christian's home run was great.

After that Machín, the bunt by Machete, Paquito, connecting hits to drive in the other run. Then I did hit high bouncer right in front of Manny. We put the ball in play, Paquito's hit and scored. Another run after that when Alexis was pitching. It was difficult, but he got the ground out and I believe that was their last breath, so to speak, and we won.

Q. With Yadier Molina as a manager, how has it been, how has been his strategy in the dugout? Dominican Republic, Puerto Rican Venezuela in the same pool. I missed one, yes, sorry for that. You were all in the same group, what do you think, together or separate?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: You better ask the fans. Actually, I don't know. But I think that this raised the importance of this tournament and this ballpark needed that. This is such a beautiful ballpark in the regular season, not many people come. Well, we got the victory and it's okay that the three teams were in the same pool, it was the most difficult one, and we advanced. It's important that we had to face them and we had to beat the best teams.

So we eliminated the Dominican Republic and now there are eight teams. The other seven teams are very good, so there will be no easy game. We have to play well. There is no space for mistakes both mentally and physically. From now on the team that plays better is going to win.

And about Yadi, no, Yadi is a leader, is a captain and as a manager he continues being a leader. It feels more or less the same. He's done a great job with the bullpen and today we had a bullpen game. The only difference is that he's not playing on the field. But Maldonado's job behind home plate is great and we haven't seen or noticed that

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Yadi is not playing a lot.

Q. Maybe this victory started to be developed yesterday. How was the meeting yesterday? How did you speak about this important game? Now Puerto Rico is going to face Mexico. You have some friends there. Can you speak about that as well?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: Honestly, we didn't speak about the game yesterday. We just had dinner and got to spend our time with our families. That was the goal, to have fun with families. And it's okay to take a step back. This tournament is very short. Being able to represent your country with the best teammates at present, this is something special and it doesn't happen a lot.

So, actually, we just went there to have fun, to have a good time, to love each other as a family and to clear our minds, you know. We came today. We played good ball. We had this rally of runs versus the Dominican Republic.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Mexico. Have you seen any games? You know some players, yes, but have you seen their performance in this first round?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: No, to be honest, I haven't seen a lot. I know some of the names. They have a good team. They have very good starting pitchers. They have very good arms in the bullpen. They sent a very important message beating the United States the way they did. Like I said, there is no easy game looking forward. We just have to play the ball we are playing. If we do that, we don't have to be worried about the others. They have good team, okay, but we have been facing very good teams as well and we have done a good job.

Q. Do you get the sense that something had gone wrong? And for all the people who think Edwin is just entrance music and a really good slider, can you explain what he means to this team and who he is?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: Like I said earlier in Spanish, I said that I didn't really know what was going on because I was playing center and I celebrated with MJ and Eddie out in the outfield and then when we started coming in, we were like looking around at everybody and it wasn't pretty much until we got to the infield dirt that we realized that something had gone wrong. At the moment we didn't know who it was and when we got there that's when we realized who it was.

But obviously aside from being the best closer in the game right now, and being a huge part of this team, you know, Sugar is one of the glue guys in that clubhouse. He's been leading the charge in terms of setting up parties for us in

Fort Myers, to start getting together as a team and having a good time and getting to know each other, the guys that don't know each other. Same here, he was one of the guys that set up that big dinner we had last night. He's just a guy that, I mean, I'm just going to put it out there, like he has a really big bank account, but his heart is way bigger than his bank account is. He's one of the really special human beings we got in that clubhouse. I mean, it sucks that -- it doesn't matter who it would have been, it would have sucked either way. But the fact that it was him, it just, it's a big blow in more ways than one.

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