

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - Cuba vs USA

Sunday, 19 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team USA

Nolan Arenado

Pregame Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with Nolan. Who has the first question?

Q. So yesterday, obviously, you experienced the really exciting, really loud, atmosphere playing against Venezuela, and the expectation is that it will be similar today. How do you think yesterday prepared you? And what's your mindset going forward to match that energy and have that noise in the stadium?

NOLAN ARENADO: Well, I think for one, we're used to it now after what we went through yesterday. I think there will be a little bit more fans for us this time through today. Maybe not too many, but I think we'll have more.

We're excited. We love playing in front of the fans. We love a packed house. That's what makes this tournament great. So, no, we're excited. We want it to be packed. We don't want to play in an empty crowd. We definitely want it packed and loud, and that's what we expect.

Q. In 2017, you had a bunch of friends and teammates that kind of reached out during the tournament saying, oh, man, I wish I was part of that or playing. Are you getting that response now from teammates and friends, like, okay, I'm in for next time?

NOLAN ARENADO: No, not a whole lot. I think everyone is just watching, probably in awe of it. I think there's probably plenty of players that wish they could play. This really is a great tournament. There's no reason why the stars of our game should not be playing in this.

I've said it before. I'm thankful that we got Mike Trout, Mookie Betts, the faces of our game that are playing this thing. Like I said, if you're throwing 96 to 100 in Spring Training, that works anywhere. So there's no reason why you can't do that here and represent your country.

But like I said, everybody has their reasons, and I



understand that. But we're happy with who we have in this locker room.

Q. You're facing Team Cuba today. You have Cuban heritage. What does that mean for you, and if you talked to your family about it?

NOLAN ARENADO: Yeah. We had a long discussion this morning about it. To be quite honest with you, there's a lot of anxious feelings. I don't know, we had a long discussion about it, we really did. We're excited to play Cuba, and I know -- you know, if it wasn't for the sacrifices my grandparents made to get here for my parents, I don't know if I would have been the player that I am today.

So there's a lot of feelings I feel toward it. I respect them, I respect the players, but we have a job to do. So we got to put that aside and take care of business tonight and then hopefully have a good game and then we can talk about it after.

Q. What's it like playing in a game with Adam Wainwright in a game of this magnitude?

NOLAN ARENADO: Yeah, I mean, obviously, it's a big game. I think when we played the Dodgers in the '21 Wild Card game, when he pitched that day, that was a huge game and, obviously, this is really big also. So I know Waino is up for it. He always is up for big games. Nothing's too big for him. He's been through it -- he's been through everything. So I love playing defense behind him and I expect Waino to be Waino.

Q. You brought up Mookie Betts and Mike Trout on this team. What's it been like watching the two of them interact throughout this tournament? Each of them talked about how much they were looking forward to playing with one other coming in.

NOLAN ARENADO: It's been great. Watching their routines and seeing how they go about their business, you understand why they are the best in this game, and I really enjoy that part. They're complete, they're five-tool players in this game, and you don't see that a lot in this game. You're fortunate to play with guys like that. It's not just them, it's our whole team. We have such a great group,

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and we come together and our focus is on winning this thing, and we're focused on today.

But watching those guys, watching Mike Trout hit a baseball, it's been pretty cool to see it up close. It's been awesome.

Q. There was a chance you and Waino would meet Yadier Molina here as a manager. Unfortunately, Puerto Rico got eliminated. How about the guys who are not seeing Yadi here and meeting him?

NOLAN ARENADO: Obviously, I wanted Puerto Rico to win for Yadi, but Mexico's tough, they are. They got good pitching and they can hit a little bit. But, obviously, yeah, I got the utmost respect for Yadi. He looked good managing. He looked like he was in control and he knows what he's doing. So I'm a huge fan of him.

Q. In the players' calendar, is this the only logical time where you can have an event like this as opposed to shutting down the sport in the middle of the season or trying to do it in November?

NOLAN ARENADO: That's a good question. I thought about that. I know the World Cup like they stop league play and then they do the World Cup. I mean, I guess you could do it at the All-Star break one year. Everyone would be in mid-season form, you wouldn't have to worry about people throwing a hundred pitches and playing nine innings, everyone would be ready for that. But taking two weeks off for the guys that aren't playing in it would be really tough.

So I don't know. I don't know. I don't know when the right time is. But I don't mind -- I mean, right now is great. It's not easy, obviously. Like I said, I think if it wasn't during this time I think more players would play.

Q. When you see the injuries that happen with Altuve, with Díaz, you know you have a long season ahead, are players fazed by that or -- obviously you're feeling bad for those guys, but at the same time do you put that out of your mind and say, I have a big season ahead as well.

NOLAN ARENADO: Obviously disappointed, sad to see Altuve get hit in the hand yesterday. Obviously he's a great player. We don't want to see people get hurt. Especially him. It was just a freak accident, really. Same with Díaz. It's disappointing. Those guys are stars. We need the stars to be playing baseball. But anything can happen. It happens in Spring Training sometimes. You're playing games, it's going to happen, unfortunately. It's disappointing that it was those two, for sure. But, I mean, I

don't know when the right time is to do it, but if you have the opportunity to do it I think you should do it.

Q. This team Cuban team is very polarizing here in Miami. People say they are traitors, people say they will heroes. The inclusion of the major league baseball players in the Cuban team do you see it as a good sign, a bad sign, a sign that the government is changing or is not? What do you think about the Cuban playing in the Big Leagues playing now with the Cuban selection?

NOLAN ARENADO: That's a good question. I think I've heard mixed reviews. I asked people about it. I asked Cuban players, former players that are Cuban what their opinion is about it. I'll probably keep that to myself. But I think, listen, I think people are proud to represent their country. Just like I'm proud to represent USA and I understand why they want to do it. I think over there there's a little bit more issues and I think people have more issues with it. But I don't think that's for me to speak on.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you.

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