

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - Cuba vs USA

Sunday, 19 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Cuba

Armando Johnson

Postgame Press Conference

United States - 14, Cuba - 2

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

Q. After this loss Cuba says goodbye to the World Classic. What factors would you highlight about the participation of your team in the Classic and what could be improved looking forward?

ARMANDO JOHNSON: It's tough. We believed that we could do a better job today, but the pitching didn't go well. No matter the result of the game, we have to give credit to the job made by the team until today. Of course I'm not satisfied. I wanted more. I always want more and more, but we couldn't, and we recognize that the guys did the very best they could.

Q. What can you say about the slogans or motives said in the stands about Patria y Vida and LIBERTARD?

ARMANDO JOHNSON: Like I said at the beginning, we were focused on the job, on our job. I seen that we have seen some provocations, but we didn't pay attention to that. We just wanted the team to have a good performance to get the win. We lost with many runs scored by the Team USA. But I told the guys that we did what we could. We have to recognize that.

Q. You say provocations, but 50 percent of the team you have at some point in time left Cuba trying to come here to live in freedom. Do you think it's that provocation?

ARMANDO JOHNSON: Anyone has the right to say whatever they want to say or think. We're not here to judge anybody. We're just here for baseball, for the sport. That's what I do. I don't have to say anything about that. I'm not a police officer or nothing like that. I respect the



way of thinking of everyone. That's what I can tell you about that.

Q. Not as a manager, but as Cuban, what do you feel? The majority of the people here in the ballpark was Cuban. What do you feel when the people is against you and identify themselves with the opposing team?

ARMANDO JOHNSON: What I can say is, yes, we have heard that, but I was not paying attention to that. We were focused on the job we wanted to perform. It didn't go well for us. That's what I can tell but that.

Q. But how did you feel as a Cuban that the Cubans do not identify themselves with their own team?

ARMANDO JOHNSON: Well, it feels bad, but I don't judge. Like I said, everyone has his or her way of thinking. We are on the field and we come here just to play baseball and the sport. That's what we wanted to do here.

Q. With this loss, Cuba hasn't won an international championship. What do you think could be the solution for that, maybe calling more and more players?

ARMANDO JOHNSON: They shouldn't stop, in my opinion. It was a beautiful experience with these MLB players. We wanted more players to join the team. Like I said, sometimes it is not okay to leave your family behind and look for new things, but I wanted these players to join the team and go from Cuba and back to Cuba all the time.

Q. Finally, Cuba is among the best four teams in the world in the last years in the Caribbean Series, or in any other international championship Cuba is having a bad performance. What do you think about being amongst the best four teams in the world in the World Classic?

ARMANDO JOHNSON: In spite of the result today, it's a huge satisfaction to manage a Cuban team together with the MLB players and our players. It's a great satisfaction. I had a great time with these players, with all of them, and I wanted this to repeat again. I'm getting older now, but I hope I can lead the team again. This is what I can tell you



about this. I'm very happy to be with the team.

Q. You made it to the semifinals. Cuba hasn't won an international championship for a long time now. When you lose to teams such as the United States, is that an impact for you?

ARMANDO JOHNSON: Team USA, we have to give them the credit. They have great baseball players, huge, solid players, and they are well engaged. I think people will have to count on them. Japan is a great team and they have great batting. I think that can be useful for them in the final.

Q. You said that there is the possibility that the players can travel. Despite of the scoreboard today, it is clear that if Cuba doesn't have professional players on the team, they cannot compete at any level. The question is: Is there any communication that the Cuban Federation -- baseball federation, because Cuba is prohibiting those players that abandoned Cuba to come back to Cuba and they cannot come back to Cuba for eight years. Not all of them received the invitation to join the team.

ARMANDO JOHNSON: Well, those that didn't receive the call or the invitation, personally speaking, I talked to many players. Some people said yes at the beginning. After that, they said no. That's what I can tell you. I don't have another answer for you. This is not my role.

Q. What happened to Yoán Moncada? How is he doing?

ARMANDO JOHNSON: He had a concussion when he was trying to catch the fly, but he's in perfect condition now. It hurts a little bit in the ribs, but he's okay.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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