

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - USA vs Dominican Republic

Sunday, 15 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Dominican Republic Manager Albert Pujols

Postgame Press Conference



MVP in the World Series. I have achieved everything in my career. But to have this opportunity to represent my country and to prepare these guys together with the coaching staff has been one of the best memories that I have as a professional.

I have to thank God, and I'm very proud of the guys, and that's it. It's a bitter drink, but we know that someone would be happy, and the other party, the other side would be sad. But we have to keep our heads-up because we did a tremendous job.

Q. The situations of the game, Severino in 2025, they hit him at .283. Henderson hit a homer. Smith hit. And why not removing the pitcher when you were losing the catcher?

ALBERT PUJOLS: It is easy to say that because you were outside, but you have to take into account everything that's going on on the field. So the decision and the game plan that we put together together with the coaching staff before the game, was well executed. You are focusing on the seventh inning and I'm speaking about the bullpen. They eliminated 14 or 15 hitters. It is not easy to face that kind of lineup, and the pitchers did a great job.

This is part of the game. If you remove Wells, how about if something happened to Ramirez? You are going to put Santana? No, I couldn't do that.

So then Wells came, and I could lose my catcher if I removed Austin Wells. You are going to speak about negative things, but I don't see that. I see the game as a whole and the great job done by all of them, especially Severino. He pitched very well, and he executed the plan that we put together for the bullpen.

Q. When you see that last pitch, do you think at all in 10 days with ABS that game ends differently?

ALBERT PUJOLS: I just said it in Spanish. I don't want to focus on the last pitch. Obviously it didn't go that way. I'm disappointed about the way that the game ends, but I don't want to criticize any of that. It just wasn't meant to be for us.

USA 2, Dominican Republic 1

Q. The history is right there. Sometimes pitchers that are not in the strike zone have been marked, especially against the Dominican Republic and the United States. How important is it to use technology in order to avoid this kind of human error?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Good evening. I am not going to focus on that last pitch. It was a huge game between two huge teams, and I'm super proud for the guys that represented us in this Classic.

Once again, we represented our homeland in this World Classic. We raised our flag and we left our brand. Our country should feel proud for those players.

At the same time, I would like to thank Austin Wells. Even when he was not born in our country, he said yes to represent our country, and he did a great job.

I always said that God controls everyone's destiny, and this year was not supposed to be our Classic. But not because we were not prepared. It was a great game. Either could win. Either team could win. In this case, the U.S. won.

Q. Great job as a manager, especially during the first stage and in the quarterfinal. Evaluating the team and the harmony they had throughout the Classic and with this result, only after this game, what do you think about this great job?

ALBERT PUJOLS: First of all, I have to thank God for this opportunity, and then Nelson and the committee for giving me this opportunity to have this beautiful experience.

I was telling the guys briefly that I played 23 years as a professional, and this last week in this team with these guys, to me it was the best experience. I have been the



I think both teams pitched well, played well. Our bullpen really did an outstanding job. Severino did a great job as well. So I'm not really going to focus the whole game, especially a great game like it was tonight, on that last pitch.

Q. I was going to say with all the great plays, catches, throws, the pitches, what are you thinking about watching all these great players as that's unfolding all night?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, I think the whole world saw in two teams some of the best players in the game, our side and their side as well. That's what's so good about this tournament.

So I'm glad the guys got to participate and really continue to grow the game of baseball, which is the commissioner's done an unbelievable job of growing the game.

I mean, for myself, from '06 until now, 20 years later, to see how much fun and how into it the fans are, it's just a great tournament. Too bad that we have to wait another three years, I think. But it's fun.

Q. What failed today, in your opinion? What was different today in the Dominican Republic, which is a different team than the first stage? What's your impression about this game that you lost, sadly?

ALBERT PUJOLS: I don't think that -- nothing failed. We executed. They had two good swings, two homers and then 2-1.

We were good at bat, but this is the game, you know? It was not meant to be our victory, as someone just said. Someone would go home happy and someone would go home sadly with tears in their eyes. That's us today. That's part of the game.

So you don't have to get stressed if I had done this or that. No, everything was okay. This is part of the game. This is a great lesson for everyone, especially for the young guys. I wish them success in the next season.

Q. I know that this is a bitter night, but thinking ahead now, the Olympics, the DR has qualified, it could be historic if they allow Major League players. Would you be available for that?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Always. Every time I have the chance to wear this jersey, I'll do it with pride to represent my country.

Once again, thank God that we gave our country that

possibility to be in the Olympics in 2028. But, of course, God willing I will be there. But right now this is not my main goal. Talking about the game, what happened, I'm thinking about my guys and the great job that they did.

Q. I'm so proud of being a Dominican in the last couple of weeks, and I think that all the fans feel like that. What have you learned as a manager in this Classic and what's your message to the Dominican people?

ALBERT PUJOLS: First of all, just like I said, this is a great opportunity that God gave me during my career. I had so many achievements, MVP, World Series, et cetera. But being around these talented players from the DR has been the best thing that has happened to me as a professional and to my country. I just have to thank all of them for the support. I know that there are some hearts broken today and many tears in the eyes, but I'm very proud to represent our country.

Thank you all for the support, that positive energy from our country. These two couple of weeks we've received that energy, and especially the way the world is today, the country's united around baseball. The fans are together.

Yes, these two weeks have been great not only for me, but for all the guys and our country that was once again united around baseball. And I hope that we stay like that, and thank you for the support.

If I learn everything every day, every single day, I mean, when you are around talented players as we have, of course you learn something every day. This is the best part. You come to the park, you talk to the coaches or to the players, and you learn a lot. And I'm going to use those takeaways for my future.

Q. I know that the things that are said in the clubhouse stay in the clubhouse, but what can you tell those players after this loss today? Guys such as Soto, Vladimir Guerrero, they forgot about their contract and they scored in the home plate.

ALBERT PUJOLS: The crazy way we have seen after that painful loss today, many of them will take an airplane tomorrow to go back to the spring training. I told them that I was so very proud, Nelson, the coaching staff, Marichal, David Ortiz, Pedro Martinez, Beltre, Incarnacion, we are very proud of them, of how they represented us and how, once again, they raised our national flag.

We told them to keep their heads-up, keep working. This was just a game. All of them should be proud, and this is what I told them.



Several players spoke. And like I said, this unites us as a country, us players as a team.

We didn't achieve our goal, that's right. And we have to wait for three more years to try again, but I have to thank them all from the bottom of my heart.

(FastScripts by ASAP Sports).

