

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - Venezuela vs Italy

Monday, 16 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Italy

Manager Francisco Cervelli

Postgame Press Conference

Venezuela 4, Italy 2

Q. If you had to make a report on the Italian team that represented the country in this WBC, what would you say about your team?

And number two, what changed about the boy that opened academy in Toscana and now he's managing a team that is in the semifinal in the WBC.

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: We are no longer the Cinderella, and this is an important -- in three years they are going to take us seriously. We have a group of young players that are going to participate in the next Classic. What they experienced today, they are going to take it away from the rest of their lives, a spectacular noise at the stadium, and my team was spectacular, fantastic, a group of friends, guys that support each other.

I wish I could have that kind of team for 162 games.

Q. Congrats on this tournament. How proud are you of your team? You neutralized Venezuela all the way to the seventh inning, and the job done by Cervelli and the coaching staff in a sport that is not highly considered in Italy, but maybe after this Classic, there will be a higher repercussion?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I just told the guys that they are the champions of this tournament. No one expected what they did. They are champions. They are incredible. They revolutionized Italy. They put another sport on the map, which is good.

You know, there were many people watching the game, and it was the middle of the night. Seven million people watching this game against a team full of superstars. They fought. Yes, I'm very proud of them.

Q. Francisco, congrats on this tournament. When you



started this project and the project of your academy how far did you think that were able to go in only one year? Is this an extra motivation for the job that you wanted to continue doing in Italy?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: When I started the academy, I didn't think that it would be so fast because this kind of process takes longer. It's only one year. So many special things happened.

Starting the new year as a manager, achieving this result is something impressive. I believe that you should wonder why are we in this world? And I think that I came to this world to serve, to change people's life. I'm a servant and their manager, but this is their show and I am their servant.

What we did this year, it is show after show, success after success. People are now looking to the other continent. And we'll continue, we'll continue. This is not the end.

Q. I'd like to know your impressions on the play of Antonacci when he decided to pitch against Acuna and he was able to get a groundout instead of selecting Chourio that could be forced out on second base.

And Michael Lorenzen, do you think he was overused as a reliever in the seventh inning? Antonacci's decision, he thought that was the right decision. Chourio was taking a major lead.

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Maybe he had to throw to the second base. Acuna runs very fast. But something is the way I see it, and it's a different thing to be on the field where you have to make decisions very fast.

We didn't make so many mistakes. We didn't fail. Today we just faced a great team. Everyone runs pressure, pressure and pressure, you know? That's the result.

Regarding Lorenzen, he was the guy. Nola pitched four innings the way we wanted, and I thought that Lorenzen could go to the eighth inning. He was under pressure, great batters, but we have to give credit to Venezuela.

Come on. We are not playing a team of the minors. It's Venezuela. The people that play in the Majors. They have



a show to run on a daily basis -- we have to give credit to that team. If you fail a pitch, they are going to connect a hit. They are so good. Acuna hit a ground out, as we wanted, but it was perfectly located, and he runs very fast. So no chance.

Lorenzen didn't make a mistake, in my opinion. He just -- we just give the credit to Venezuela.

Q. I was talking with Pasquantino, and I asked him to send a message to an Italian child that was watching the game, and he was emotional with the question. Do you have any idea of how big this has been and the generations that were watching these games for the first time? Those kids that are watching the game and maybe they could become professional baseball players because of you, because of your team, have you thought about that?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I'm going to speak about the time when I was a child in Venezuela. Remember when there was soccer workup? For one month we all played soccer. I think that someone will be with a rubber ball or grabbing a bat, they want to go to the field.

The noise at the stadium, you know, that's what we were trying to do, more people willing to go to the field. I mean, they are making my job very easy in Italy because they changed in just 12 days Italian baseball, you know?

Now in April it's going to be totally different, and I've got to be ready for that.

(FastScripts by ASAP Sports).