

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - Venezuela vs Italy

Monday, 16 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Venezuela

Maikel Garcia

Ronald Acuna Jr.

Postgame Press Conference

Venezuela 4, Italy 2

Q. Right now, Maikel, when everything started, you saw that Altuve, Lopez were not on the list, injuries, et cetera. How did you process in order to understand that those that were on the roster, on the list, were able to go to the final of the World Classic?

RONALD ACUNA JR.: It was very difficult, you know, when we had those losses because of injuries, but we just trusted the roster. We believed in the whole team, and that's why I came to the final.

Q. You two have been playing baseball together now for a long, long time. What has it been like to play together on this stage for Venezuela? And what memories do you have of playing together growing up in La Sabana?

RONALD ACUNA JR.: We have a lot of memory. We grow together. Every time we play together because we live in the same house, when my dad played in the United States. So I'm close to my brother. So every time when he lost or I lost, we're fighting. So, dreams come true today.

MAIKEL GARCIA: When we were young, we were growing up together, and we came to the United States together because his dad played in the United States, but we fight every time. But when we play together in WBC, it is a great feeling for us and for our family. We enjoy every time we're playing together in winter ball and in the WBC. That's amazing, and I think that's a goal for the family too.

Q. What was the postgame scene like in the clubhouse? Celebrating, dancing, or looking ahead already to tomorrow?

MAIKEL GARCIA: A lot of dancing. I've never been to the



championship of the WBC before, and we get there and we're happy. We're excited to play tomorrow against the United States. We have to come tomorrow and play the same way we played against Japan, against Italy, and we have to show the world who Venezuela is.

Q. And the dancing you mentioned in the clubhouse and in the dugout, who would you say is the best dancer and who is the worst?

MAIKEL GARCIA: Honestly, I think my cousin is the best dancer.

Q. Many Venezuelans have said that this Classic is a distraction of what's going on in the world. What does that mean?

RONALD ACUNA JR.: We're here to speak baseball. Our country deserves the game tomorrow. As my brother said, we are going to go out with the same energy and excitement. The country deserves that.

Q. Great job, guys. I don't know if you were able to feel the Venezuelan people jumping at the stadium. Were you concerned somehow for the umpires because of the call yesterday, or were you ready for any situation?

RONALD ACUNA JR.: We understand that umpires are human beings and they make mistakes. They are here for a reason. Sometimes you are frustrated because of a bad call, but this is part of the game. You just have to stay calm and focused.

Q. Question for both. I was talking to a few fans outside, some Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and Venezuelans of course, and they said that Venezuela is going to play for Latin America. They asked all the Latin American countries to be together tomorrow. The Dominicans said the same. They want you to win. What's your message to those Puerto Ricans and Dominicans that are going to support you tomorrow in the World Baseball Classic?

RONALD ACUNA JR.: Very happy for that support because we are all Latin America. We are always



together. The Dominican Republic loves me and I love them. We are just going to go out tomorrow and give our best to win.

MAIKEL GARCIA: Dominican Republics, Puerto Ricans, they want us to play for Latin America. But as Venezuelan players, we are playing for our country. And, of course, putting Latin America in a high position, showing that we have great baseball, we have great talent, but we are playing for Venezuela in the first place.

Q. This is for Ronald. Now you have the possibility to have revenge against the U.S. after three years.

RONALD ACUNA JR.: The baseball gives you this kind of opportunities. Life is so ironic. I'm very happy to play the United States again. They are all superstars, but we have a great team as well. We are going to play our game. Let's see what happens tomorrow.

Q. Question for both, Maikel first and then Ronald. You were struck out three times, and then you connected the hit to the right field. You have over four extra bases and you have been able to help the offense. The question for both: How do you imagine the day tomorrow?

MAIKEL GARCIA: In the past I was focused on the past, things that I couldn't change. That at-bat against Nicaragua three -- or no, Israel. Okay, three strikeouts. We are playing for the country. Forget about the past.

Victor told me that I was a good at-bat even when I had strikeouts. And thank God I was calm and I was able to connect that long drive.

We are ready for tomorrow. Pressure is coming from a hometown like ours and to reach the level where we are now.

Q. You mentioned Victor Martinez, I have seen helping you in the BPs. How has he helped you? What have you learned from him?

RONALD ACUNA JR.: Thank God he's around us as a coach. He's been with us for a short time, but he has taught a lot, especially me. He taught me a lot about patience.

Many details that I didn't know that he knows, now we are learning from him, and I have to be thankful for all the pieces of advice he has given.

Q. Question for both. Ronald, your impressions on this last couple of years with the injuries, missing the

World Series? It's like a roller coaster of emotions that you have lived for some reasons, several reasons. And now you are in the final of this World Classic. Your reflections on this?

RONALD ACUNA JR.: I am very happy with everything that happened to me, including the injuries. I'm more mature as a person, I'm more mature as a player. So I'm more experienced right now.

I'm stealing bases. I thought to myself that I wouldn't steal more bases, but this is not going to be the case.

Q. The family is the most important thing. Maybe you won't be together in a World Series, but you are in the final of a World Classic with other two brothers, the Contreras brothers. Is this team a big family like you are and the Contreras brothers?

MAIKEL GARCIA: We are Venezuelans. We arrived in West Palm Beach. We didn't know some players, but we come from Venezuela and we have that chemistry. We proved that in West Palm Beach. We are brothers. We are a family. We are a group. We have to trust each other. We cannot win this with two players, but with the other 28.

Q. You have achieved many things, both individually and collectively. You have the game tomorrow, but where would you put the game today, the achievement today? And a message for everyone in Venezuela, what could you tell them?

RONALD ACUNA JR.: I would put this as number one in my career. I love the Atlanta Braves, but before playing for the Braves, I was born in Venezuela. Back in Venezuela, Ronald Acuna Jr. -- I would put this as number one in my career. I am very happy for representing my country.

MAIKEL GARCIA: Yes, same for me. Number one, representing your country feels differently. I had this experience for the first time, and I learned a lot from coaches, from the other players. I'm taking away things from the coaches and teammates. I'm going to apply those things in the Majors.

(FastScripts by ASAP Sports)