

World Baseball Classic: Pool A

Thursday, 5 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

Team Puerto Rico

Yadier Molina

Edwin Díaz

Martín Maldonado

Workout Day Press Conference



Q. My question is for Edwin. Edwin, I understand that this is your first time playing in Puerto Rico. What can you tell us about that excitement of playing in front of your people and how it compares to the first time you pitched for Puerto Rico in a World Classic?

EDWIN DÍAZ: First time I'm going to pitch here as a professional baseball player, I'm really happy, really proud. First time in my professional career I've been able to be here, and now I have a chance.

I'm excited and anxious to take the mound and be able to pitch in front of my people in Puerto Rico, and I'm really happy.

Q. Following the line of the first time in Puerto Rico, but I imagine it's like a feeling of an additional wish to erase that memory of 2023 and the way that you ended. You win a great game against the Dominican, but then the result came onto second place because of your injury. And Martín, if you talk about your appointment as captain, how did you take it?

EDWIN DÍAZ: Really, yes. As I said, these days my mission, I'm not done. That's why I'm here. Again, what happened in 2023, it's an injury. I left it behind me as soon as it happened. It was something that was out of my hands and out of my control, but I stayed healthy the next few years, and I have a chance to be here representing my country, and more so in Puerto Rico.

It's going to be my first time. I'm really happy. I'm really anxious for tomorrow to get here, and it will be my chance to pitch and help the team win. That's what I'm here for, to help the team win. Whatever position Yadi wants me in, that's what I'm here for, to do my job.

Q. Colombia is a team that has everything to win and

nothing to lose. How do we keep the focus, and how do we determine to do the job and not let the evening get the best of you?

MARTÍN MALDONADO: As a team, we have our goals. There is no small team. We know this is a quick tournament that anything can happen. From day one that Yadier talked, it was precisely what it was about, that this is as a team to go out and play our game, and we know that we have the fans behind us, and this is going to have an impact, as I've always said. It's going to be player No. 10 for us.

Q. Your pitching seems to be one of the strengths of this team. Obviously there are some absences in the offensive lineup. How can the players overcome those deficiencies in other aspects of the game?

EDWIN DÍAZ: I believe that Puerto Rico has always been characterized in the Classic is our pitching. Our pitching has always been key. We have a great bullpen. We have a lot of guys that are new but they have a lot of experience. We have pitchers that have pitched in the Big Leagues.

I believe that our team, aside from the pitchers, we have a full team, and they have a youth that are hungry to win. I compare this team to the one in 2017, which was the first time for many of us, and we were able to do big things. I believe that all of us, including myself, are hungry to win. Everybody is.

The young ones are going to give their best, and us veterans we're also going to give the best.

Q. Yadi, for you, you take the momentum of this team, this is the favorite team of this group, but how can we not let that become pressure, become negative and keep it as a motivation of something positive?

YADIER MOLINA: I'm really happy to have this group of guys. We have a talented group. We have a group that is fearless. We know that from the first day, like Machete said, we're not going to bow our heads. We have the ones we have, and we trust our talent, we trust our pitching, we



trust the defense. We're going to score. We're going to run the bases.

We believe that these guys are ready for this event.

Q. Yadier, this question is for you. I'd like to get your impressions after that first practice and the practice games. What is left to practice with the team?

YADIER MOLINA: The unity I've seen in these guys on the team, the chemistry we have is really good, and that's really important. Whoever knows baseball knows that chemistry is something that's really important. I believe that pitching, as Sugar says, it's our forte with the defense.

What I did like about the first game was from the start we came out aggressive with the bats. We ran the bases real good. Second game, well, the result wasn't there.

Obviously we saw a lot of good, positive things, and I think that we will have a ready mentality. We're going to have a mentality as champions, and we're thinking we're going to do it. To have that mentality, and the guys are positive with that.

It's a matter of executing and making the game and not let the momentum take the best of them, because it's going to be a great show for them. These are new faces. This is an event for them that there are a lot of rookies, but we are very confident that we are going to win this first round and we'll move on to the second round.

Q. There are a lot of variables and options to play within the entire lineup and the field. Do you know who's going to start with this game with Colombia?

YADIER MOLINA: Yes, we have the lineup ready. We have versatility, a lot of players that can play different positions, and that makes us a very dangerous team. We have guys that can play second base, center field, first base, third base.

That as coaches gives us a lot of flexibility to make decisions.

Q. First of all, congratulations to all three of you. Because you're representing Puerto Rico with dignity in the Big Leagues and now you're representing us with our uniform. Yadier, in the last Classic you were behind the plate practically as another coach, another manager, and in this Classic, you're the manager and you're not behind the plate. What does it mean to have Martín Maldonado behind the plate? As Dusty Baker told me once, it likes having another manager on the field.

YADIER MOLINA: Yes, it is an advantage to have Martín for so many years of experience and a winner of World Series and winner in Puerto Rican baseball. So having him is an advantage, and it helps us a lot in controlling the pitches, and the pitchers trust him a lot. To have Martín, as I said, it is an advantage, and it helps us a lot.

We count on him that his experience will help these kids, and he'll help them to pitch better.

Q. First question for you, you've been in all of the Classics and the last two as a manager, how can you compare the identity of this group with the identities of the previous groups that you've participated in? Martín, if you could talk a little bit about this last dance that you're going to have in baseball. Sugar, if any way the Dodgers have given you any restriction to participate with others in terms of pitching, innings, and so forth?

YADIER MOLINA: I will tell you the identity of this group of talented players is the same as in prior tournaments. We have no ego. Neither did we have in 2006, 2009, 2013. We have no ego. This is not going to be an exception. Guys are concentrating on coming out and representing their jersey in the best way and bringing home that championship.

MARTÍN MALDONADO: On my part, it is an honor and a privilege to be able to close my career representing Puerto Rico. I believe that we as a team, we've seen in the previous Classics, we get together as a country, as an island, as all kinds of citizens outside of Puerto Rico get together to support us. And to be able to say we're present at this last Baseball Classic, as a player, what better than to do it with Puerto Rico's jersey?

EDWIN DÍAZ: On my part, it's just to keep on with the Spring Training plan. I'm going in my fourth Spring Training. The team has a plan. The plan I have to follow. Nothing but do my job. I have a plan. They have a plan, and we're going to get our hands dirty.

Q. This question is for all three. Right now in the 2026 season, there's going to be the APS system with balls and strikes. Yadier and Martín, unfortunately you're not playing anymore, but for you guys would it be good or bad to have these systems? Do you agree? Like you, Sugar, do you agree with this, now it's a machine that's going to decide what's a strike and what's a ball?

YADIER MOLINA: I do think it could help the game. Obviously we're all human, and sometimes we make bad

decisions, talking about umpires. To be able to get a chance to have a challenge at an important moment of the game and change the rhythm of the game, I think it's fine.

MARTÍN MALDONADO: I think the same thing. It's something that a lot of times we forget that umpires are human beings, like Yadier says. There are good days and bad days in any kind of job. To have the chance to be able to correct oneself, as happened with the replay previously, I believe that as fans it's just to get used to it, the way they got used to it with the replay.

EDWIN DÍAZ: To me, I think, just like them, it's going to help the game. The umpires, as you say, they're not perfect, but to have a chance for us as a pitcher or catcher, if we see a close pitch to be able to call it and try to see if we get the pitch that we thought could have been a strike. It does help us.

I tried it once, and I liked it. So I'm with it.

Q. Yadier, there was talk about Lugo starting the first game and Elmer will pitch in the third game. Can you confirm that? How about the second and fourth game? Who are going to be the openers?

YADIER MOLINA: Yes, we're going game by game. Lugo is going to be first. Then Eduardo Rivera, the left-handed pitcher, and then Elmer is the third. I'll let you know for the fourth.

Q. Could Edwin see action tomorrow, if necessary?

YADIER MOLINA: Yes, yes. Hopefully we won't have to use him and win 10-0 and save him, but yes, that could happen. He's healthy and happy with this team. We're counting on him, in Edwin.

Q. Compound question, two questions in one. First of all, how excited are you with this young team? One of the guys says it's a group that's similar to 2017 because it's their first experience. Talk to me, how excited are you? How much do you like this challenge of having to be able to manage an offense which may be a little different? Are you going to have to play the small game? That's one.

And what was your reaction with the absences of Correa, Lindor and Baez?

YADIER MOLINA: I'm going to tell you this group, as I said before, it is a talented group that has a desire to win. They will do everything. They are prepared. They're ready to compete, and from day one the message got home that no one is better than anyone. We're all going to sweat our

jersey, and that is the message that came out the first day.

I do trust each one of them. I trust the game. We have a lot of talent. As you said, it's a small game, and it's going to happen a lot. We're going to make our runs, running bases, running from first to third, and playing the small game.

What can I say, the second one, the absences, obviously when you have absences like that, having names like Baez or Correa or Lindor, obviously it hurts to have those players that are your brothers that would sweat the shirt, not be able to have a chance to be here. It hurts you.

But we are concentrating, we trust that the guys that are there are ready to represent them and to show the people of Puerto Rico that we can count on them. I'm really happy with them, and I can't wait for them to have a chance to represent Puerto Rico and to be able to win this tournament.

Q. You're in your second stage as Puerto Rico's manager. During that course, you've won two winter leagues and had different teams. How has Yadier Molina grown, and how can that experience help make decisions for this?

YADIER MOLINA: Well, a lot. You mature with every game you coach. You keep on learning, having people around you and helping you. It was important in my case.

I think that I am very ready to keep on helping these young kids, and learning from them and for them to help me too.

Q. It's 20 years of Classics. You've been in all of them in different phases. What do you think about the future of this tournament in the next 20 years, how important it is for Puerto Rico? And knowing that this thing about the insurances may leave the best players from showing up in this tournament?

YADIER MOLINA: I'm going to tell you this kind of tournament, Carlos Beltrán has said in our meeting, in our dinner, that he played in the Big Leagues a lot of years and he won tournaments, but this kind of tournament is very important for us Puerto Ricans because we love it.

I'm going to tell you about my experience. It's a tournament I enjoy a lot to represent my country, my family, the island, and we take it very seriously. I think, if this tournament keeps on happening, you're going to count on me as a coach or as whatever because I really love this kind of tournament.

Q. Any of the three, what does it mean to have Kiké

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Hernandez here to support?

MARTÍN MALDONADO: Well, Kiké is a key piece of what Puerto Rico has achieved in the Classic. Kiké, as you all know, he is someone who is always laughing. He's happy, he's watching the games. He is knowledgeable of the game. He's a winner. To have him with us, helping us veterans who have been here for a while on this side without being in the playing field.

I know that because of his injury, he can't be here, and he would love to be here. For him to have taken that initiative on behalf of Yadier and the Federation, to get the chance to be here, and for him to say he's present, he's going to help a lot of young guys that are going to be in the dugout looking and watching on the first day playing the Classic means a lot for Puerto Rico.

But to play the Classic in Puerto Rico is a different feeling. I believe that Kiké's presence is going to be that -- it's going to make it easier for the ballplayers who have not been at the Classic.

Q. Yadi, tomorrow you start before Colombia. You're going to have José Quintana on the mound. How do you view José Quintana, going against the Colombian team?

YADIER MOLINA: I had a chance to meet José, being a catcher and playing with him, and he is a competitor. He's a kid who pitches very well, and that's why he's been in the Major Leagues for many years.

We do have a good plan with him, how we're going to face him. We know he's going to be aggressive with his fastball. We are very prepared for him. We do know he's a competitor. He's going to go out and give the best of himself to win, and we're ready for him.

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