

World Baseball Classic: Pool A - Cuba vs Panama

Friday, 6 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

Team Cuba

German Mesa

Leonel Moas

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Good morning. The last few years Cubans' forte has been scouting. Could you tell us what it is that you all know or what have you studied more about the Panama team prior to today's game?

GERMAN MESA: Well, we have all the scouting done on Panama, on the pitcher who is going to pitch today. Players, we've scouted them. We've studied the pitchers and the players. We already have the scouting report of the other players.

Q. So what do you know about that pitcher? What do they use to dominate?

GERMAN MESA: Well, with different pitchers, they use different kinds of pitches. There's the slider, the fastball. It's the pitcher that controls the strike zone.

Q. Could you tell us about the lineup?

GERMAN MESA: Today's lineup would be Roel, Moncada, Ariel Martinez, Arruebarrena at shortstop, Omar Hernandez would be the catcher, Guibert in right field, Moas in left field, and Cappe would be the ninth batter, with Moinelo as the pitcher.

Q. Moinelo is the most complete pitcher on the team. If the game is close, would you risk going beyond 50, up to 60, and risk losing him for more than four days?

GERMAN MESA: There we have a strategy. The strategy is we want him to pitch on the fourth game. We do have a pitching plan. God willing, it will come out right. We've been working on it, and we're fine.

Q. Good morning. In this lineup with Roel is left-handed and then have Moncada, a switch hitter. Are we going to see this lineup in the next game against Colombian with right-handed Teheran?



GERMAN MESA: It could change. It could change in terms of how the game develops.

Q. Will we see Moncada batting righty or lefty?

GERMAN MESA: Moncada is going to bat either way he feels comfortable. Moncada is Moncada.

Q. Going into the lineup, Despaigne didn't seem well since Venezuela, since Nicaragua. He did not seem well in the games against Arizona. Why are you still trying with him?

GERMAN MESA: He was not well in Arizona. In the other events we've had, he's had good performance hitting cleanup. We're not asking Despaigne to be just an average hitter. He's doing his duty like any player, like any player in the lineup who will serve a function. That's what we've been instilling in them for everyone to know their own role. His role is to drive runs in and score runs.

Q. 20 years ago Panama played against Cuba here. You were not on the field but you were here. What do you recall of that team? What do you remember of that game?

GERMAN MESA: Oh, s---, don't use my memory. Really too much has passed, too much time, and even -- I was with a friend, Puerto Rican friend who was reminding me -- he was talking to me about '93 when I used to play. I said, hey, don't use my memory because these are things that happen.

But what I do recall the team, it was quite a strong team, very together. They had a really good tournament. That was the first Classic you're talking about, right? That's more or less what I remembered.

Q. We were talking yesterday with you when you received the news you were going to play a regular. When you slept on it, the news, did you talk to your family? Did you talk to your dad? Did he give you a message, any advice for today's game?



LEONEL MOAS: The family is very happy over there following me all the time. Yes, I did speak to my dad. He's my best adviser. Just to go out and do my job and enjoy what I'm doing.

Q. German, one last question. How important is this game today knowing that you still have to play the home team at home, as well as a strong team like Canada and Colombia. How much would Cuba's future weigh on today's game?

GERMAN MESA: All games are important. Every game is important. We have experience. You all know we have quite a bit of experience. There's tournaments we've started fine, and then we may not have started fine, and we then fix the problem.

I think we want to change that. We want to start out fine and to be more at ease in the game. You know that the field is the one that has the last word.

Q. For Leonel Moas, this is your first team on such a large scale internationally. Have you played in any lower leagues with Cuba?

LEONEL MOAS: No, my first team was in 2022 in the National series that I went with the Granma team as reinforcement, and that was my first participation.

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