

World Baseball Classic: Pool A - Puerto Rico vs Colombia

Friday, 6 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

Team Puerto Rico

Yadier Molina

Eduardo Rivera

Kiké Hernandez

Pregame Press Conference

YADIER MOLINA: Yadier Molina.

YOAN MONCADA: Eduardo Rivera.

PLAYER 2: Kiké Hernandez.

Q. Good afternoon. I've got a question for each one of you. Yadier, I don't know if you had a chance to see any part of the Cuba-Panama game. If so, I would like to know your impressions of the team, starting with Panama, which is tomorrow's matchup?

YADIER MOLINA: Good afternoon, everyone. I did not have an opportunity to watch the game. After tonight's game, I'll sit down and watch it a little.

Q. Do you want to talk about those teams?

YADIER MOLINA: A lot of respect towards them. Like I said yesterday, we're going to respect our opponent, but we're concentrated on ourselves.

Q. Eduardo, you're starting. Your expectations? How are you prepared? What do you know about the rival? What do you expect from the game?

EDUARDO RIVERA: Right now tomorrow's game, they'll give it to me in a meeting tomorrow. I have prepared for this since I got to Puerto Rico, and I'm going to give it my all.

Q. Kiké, you're here. Yadier said yesterday the ones that are here are the ones. Talk to me about you joined this team to accompany them but you are present with your team and supporting this team.

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: It is an honor for me to be here in any



capacity. It's always been a dream of mine to represent Puerto Rico here, especially in the Classic. I had a chance to represent them in the Caribbean Series, but the Classic is something else.

Machete, since last year's playoffs, he was telling me, even if I didn't play, I had to be with the team. I have an injury, and I played two Classics already. As a group leader, I know that it does mean a lot, not just to me, but for the coaching staff and some of the younger players to have a veteran presence in the clubhouse is important.

As soon as I signed with the Dodgers, I asked for their permission, and asked permission from Mariana, and they said that I could play a few games here.

Q. Kiké, congratulations for the new member of your family. Second, how do you visualize yourself being an instrument, an important instrument in this game knowing that you won't be able to play?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: Well, it's one more voice in the dugout. I've participated not only in this tournament twice already, but I've seen a lot of ball games, and I had a chance to play in five or six World Series. There's nothing that happens on the field that I haven't seen before.

Obviously we have a great coaching staff that can be in charge of that, but sometimes as a player, there are things that mean more that comes from another player rather than a coach. So I'm here in any capacity.

For example today, Colombia's pitcher is a guy that I've had a lot of experience with. I've faced him a lot of times. Any small thing is important.

Q. Yadi, we saw last night several videos. Are those things that you could share with us that you saw last night?

YADIER MOLINA: I'm going to tell you we had a great time with family. It's very important, this chemistry, and to try to get to know each other.



As I said yesterday, this is a young team. It's a team that has little to no experience in this tournament. Obviously getting to know each other and getting to know their wives, their children is something that from the first Classic we've done.

Every event that happens, we try to get closer, and I think that in that way we'll be able to play and win games.

Q. Eduardo Rivera, congratulations for being in this Classic. In the winter, you were in the Caribbean Series. What does it mean for you? What does it mean for your family having these national colors?

EDUARDO RIVERA: Well, it's been great news for Eduardo Rivera. Very proud of the chance to be able to represent Puerto Rico. Also to thank Yadier Molina and all of the staff of the Classic for giving me a chance to give everything of myself tomorrow.

My dad, who's the best in the world, he's the one who always takes me everywhere, and I love him very much, and I love Puerto Rico and my dad.

Q. Yadi, there is a photo that went viral on the social networks and media with a photo that you were with Bryan Torres. It says Puerto Rico doesn't bow its head to any country. Bryan has had a lot of difficulties in his professional life. How is that chemistry?

YADIER MOLINA: Bryan went to St. Louis. Obviously I've had a lot of communication with him. He's a great guy, a great player. He's not afraid of anything. That guy is going to give everything of himself fearlessly.

The way I can reach every player, not only Bryan, I'm going to try to help them in their career. Obviously he's a guy that we're counting on.

Q. Kiké, congratulations for the birth of your child. Even though you cannot be on the field with the team, what do you think of our team? If you can compare them with another team from 2017.

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: I see this is a young team who is very hungry and has a lot of desire to win. People say the team is not complete, in quotes, but if there's something that makes us Puerto Ricans, it's that we take advantage to the maximum. I know that all of these guys are there, they don't lack for anything. Maybe on paper, people may disregard us, but I think we may have a lot of surprises.

It's one of the deepest pitching staffs we've had before. And the offense, it's a young team, very athletic. We may not have five home runs in the game, but we can put the

ball in play and do small things, which is what makes you win in tournaments like this.

Q. Yadier Molina, you're the only person who has been in the dugout four times as a player, two times as a coach, and all of the Classics, which is six. How does that make you feel to be coaching Puerto Rico's team and be a part of the history and being the only one who is six times in a row in a Classic?

YADIER MOLINA: Well, it is an honor. It is an honor for us to be here. It's a great chance.

Of course Puerto Rico means a lot not only to me, but to my family, and to be able to represent them fills me with pride. And to have a chance of having played it and to have a chance of coaching these young guys is something that really fills me with blessings, and I will always be willing to be in one way or another with Puerto Rico's uniform on.

Q. My question is to Kiké. Kiké, your absence was the first one that we learned of. With all the news about the insurance, maybe Puerto Rico is the team that got the most affected with the insurance thing. What is your opinion as to what has happened with this team in terms of the insurance and the absences you have?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: It is unfortunate. It was hard news. It's a big blow to all of us not only for us, but to the country, but to us as individuals, you can play and you're told that you can't play for X and Y reasons.

So if there's something that a player when you're signing off as a free agent, it's to be able to control what you can control. Unfortunately, there are things outside of your control in this game. Things like insurance are out of our control, and there's nothing that we can do. It's something that is happening unfortunately. It's something that happened a long time ago. We cannot rely on that.

The ones that are here are the guys that are here, and they're the ones that are going to do the job.

Q. You're one of the founders of this tournament as a player. How can it help or not help the players with you having the experience of playing for years. You've been in several World Series.

Kiké, congratulations on the birth of your child.

Being a veteran, how does that benefit or not benefit, based on the pressure for the guys to play here?

YADIER MOLINA: It will always benefit to play in front of

your family, your fans. It's the sixth man. As they say in basketball, it's the sixth man, but in this case, it benefits us in a way that the fans are going to be standing, they're going to be yelling, they're going to be supporting us and cheering us, and we know what that means.

That's why this group of guys is going to come out to wear this jersey, to play strong. We know it's a big responsibility to play for your family, play with the people watching you, and not to take distraction because there will be a lot of distractions in the tournament.

I think that these guys can do it. We're confident, and we're going to do it. We're going to make it.

Q. Yadi, one last question. We saw Eddie Rosario practicing at first base. Will they be platoon players?

YADIER MOLINA: That's the good thing with this team, guys have a lot of versatility. Guys are ready for anything. MJ was looking for a chance in playing other positions, just like anything, and they want to play the game. They're in the lineup, and they're looking for options so that they can be in the lineup.

Q. Kiké, let me ask you, you've been in several World Series. You're one of the players with the best numbers in a World Series. How can you compare playing in the World Series and the pressure of playing here in Puerto Rico for these guys?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: Well, none. World Series is the biggest thing in this sport because that's what you dream of, to play in the World Series with bases loaded, 3-2 count, and I've played in five and I've played two Classics, and Classics has nothing to envy. Yadi can attest to that.

The Classic kind of feels above the World Series, maybe it's because of what we have on the chest, and it's not the name of the tournament.

But I did have a chance of playing here in the Caribbean Series, and to play at Hiram Bithorn, I believe that every Puerto Rican player, not only in the Big Leagues, should play here with a full stadium. This is where we always want to play.

We waited for 13 years, and we wanted to come back, and the fans were excited and want us to come here. So it won't be any pressure. It's going to be like the energy, the adrenaline that the players are going to have is going to elevate their game.

Q. Kiké, congratulations on being a dad again. How are your expectations being a new dad? You spent

time with your son for a few weeks. Talk to me about the sensations as a new father.

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: It's difficult, not only leaving my baby, but leaving Mariana. What women go through giving birth makes them superheroes.

I'm also a dad, but I'm also Kiké. Maybe at home I'm daddy, but it also means a lot to me to be with them. If I can't be with them on the field, I can be with the team at least for a few days and to give as much as I can to the team. That's what we're all here for.

Yadi, he makes lineup, sets the pitching staff and does what he can do but in the end it's the players that have to do the work.

I think that my experience can help. I can contribute something and help us win. This has been a dream of mine since 2006 to play the Classic in Puerto Rico, and it's not going to happen. When Machete said that I had to be here, I said yes. They talked to Yadi, and they had no problem with me being in the dugout.

It was a difficult decision, but Mariana said yes, and I'm here.

Q. How is your rehabilitation? When can we expect to see you in uniform with the Dodgers?

KIKÉ HERNANDEZ: Regardless of how I feel, I have to wait like 60 days or 60 games. I'm doing well. My recovery is going very well. I'm a few weeks advanced in how I feel. That's why they said yes. They know I'm not going to knock myself down in Puerto Rico. I'm going to do everything in my rehabilitation.

The plan is I've always been optimistic, and I don't want to miss any more days than the 60 days. The earliest I can play is May 24th. If everything goes as it should, I'll play May 24th. As long as I'm ready for October, that's what matters.

Q. What was your impression of the mosaic?

YADIER MOLINA: Oh, my God, what a work. It's admirable. The guy did beautiful art, and to be able to be enshrined there makes me immensely proud to be on that wall with so many legends. To be able to be there is something that fills me with pride.

I met the guy yesterday, and he told me how he did all those things, and it's really a great job. It's a great work of art.

Q. I would like if you could tell us about the drafting of that lineup for tonight's game. You've Eddie Rosario as designated hitter. Talk to us a little bit about that.

YADIER MOLINA: We went with Hernaiz playing shortstop. And Eddie he has a left-hand swing, with Eddie, Eddie is a fighter. There are players that are for the season and players that are for tournaments, and Eddie is a tournament guy. He's fearless. He moves forward, and we trust him.

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