

World Baseball Classic: Pool A - Panama vs Puerto Rico

Saturday, 7 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

Team Puerto Rico

Yadier Molina

Elmer Rodriguez

Eddie Rosario

Pregame Press Conference



Q. Obviously I'd like to hear your impressions about how the team is looking. Elmer, if you could talk about the Cuba game in advance.

YADIER MOLINA: Good afternoon, everyone. What can I say? I feel really happy with the guys. The guys are working, and were really concentrating in terms of getting good at-bats and winning. That's the goal. To win the games.

Obviously, as I said, we have a lot of players who are tournament players, including Eddie and Machete. They are guys who are leaders, and that's the goal for people. We're happy for them. That's the goal. We'd like them to go out every night to play as if it were Game 7 and represent that jersey.

ELMER RODRÍGUEZ: I feel good. Happy to be here in Puerto Rico. We're getting ready, scouting the guys, the players, and creating a game plan. Happy with the job that we've been doing, and we're happy to go out and play.

Q. Yadi, yesterday you said some players are tournament players, some players are season players. What's the difference? How would you describe the two?

YADIER MOLINA: I would say my experience is like, when you put this uniform on, the Puerto Rico jersey on, it's a different feeling. So the level of play, how you care. When you play a season, it's 162 games. In the tournament, it's like one week, maybe two. So it's a different feel.

When I say that, you're going to find different guys that care more about this (indicating jersey), especially the older guys, the ones that are coming out for the game. They care to put on a really good show for this.

Q. Let me ask you, today we have Eduardo Rivera on the mound. What is the approach with him today, his confidence, how you're seeing him? Do you have any limit with him in terms of the innings?

YADIER MOLINA: Yeah, with Eduardo, obviously we know that he has great talent. He's a left-handed pitcher with a lot of velocity, a guy who's young with a wish to keep on moving forward. We have Christian Vazquez, who caught for him, was a catcher for him in winter ball games. So we trust him, we hope that he will have good games. We know what he can do.

We know that he's a very talented guy. We know that he'll give his best, and we know that he'll play three or four innings.

Q. Aside from the team Puerto Rico, I would like an evaluation of two Panamanian players who see you as an idol. Ivan Herrera and Leonard Bernal who is here. Can you make a comment and can you give us an evaluation of what you were able to see in Panama and Cuba?

YADIER MOLINA: I have these guys in St. Louis, Ivan and Leonard, both of them. We know they're great ballplayers. Ivan is a great batter who works hard and works hard on this defense. Leonel, who won a Gold Glove with us in Double-A, guys that have a lot of talent.

As I said before, we respect all teams. We know that Panama is going to compete strong. What can I say about them? They are a quick team. They're going to run the bases. They're going to be ready for that.

These two people, these two ballplayers, I love to watch them. In this tournament, Ivan wasn't able to come because of several reasons, but they are really good guys, and I am really happy to have helped them at some point in time.

Q. How excited are you to pitch in front of your friends and family? And what have you enhanced this



off-season to come back even stronger in Spring Training and stuff?

ELMER RODRÍGUEZ: It feels good. I've always wanted to be here, my first time playing here. I never got the chance to play winter ball. Playing here in front of my family and friends is always going to be special. I'm looking forward to that.

I worked this past off-season just trying to work on refining my pitches, command-wise, execution, get a better feel for myself. I feel like I did that and feel good right now.

Q. The question is for the manager as to the decision, today's decision to have Rivera on the mound, one of the rookies here in the World Baseball Classic. He knows very well how to play with the Santurce team. What can you expect of him starting on a stage that is going to blow up later on?

YADIER MOLINA: Eduardo is a guy that I know very well. He came from my town. I know his family, know his dad, and I've known him and followed him, and I've followed him ever since he was little.

I know his career. This guy has a lot of talent, as I said. The kid has the ability to be in this kind of field. He's done so before with the Caribbean Series in terms of the finals, and the Puerto Rico league.

As I said, we fully trust him. That's why he's pitching in the second game.

Q. Thank you all for everything you do. This question is for Eddie. Eddie, I was talking to some historians, and they're saying that it's one of the moments that they felt Hiram Bithorn Stadium vibrate the most. This was a group thing, a team, but you were one of the stars that excited a lot of people. What was going through your mind when people were thinking maybe you should not be on this team? Many of us know everything you contribute to the team. It was a moment of vindication for you. What crossed your mind?

EDDIE ROSARIO: First of all, nothing crossed my mind. I'm just watching the pitcher. All I want to do is get a hit. Whatever happens in the bleachers stays in the bleachers. I'm focused on the game, and I don't want anything to make me lose my concentration.

I'm just proud of this, and it's great to make the stadium wild. It's a pride to be and to play from Guayama, and this feels very special.

Q. Throughout your career, you've kind of come up in clutch moments a lot, like in the playoffs, WBC. Is there something that you -- how do you stay relaxed in these moments? How do you stay balanced and just focused on what's going on?

EDDIE ROSARIO: What's key, I never feel afraid in that moment. I concentrate on home plate. I love that moment. I want to do everything good when I have this moment. I've done it before. It's no surprised for me.

Q. Hi, Eddie. You were one of the hitters in the batter's box where fans were screaming your name. Every time you have a Puerto Rico jersey, you light up. What makes it special to have that uniform and play the way you do every time you represent Puerto Rico?

EDDIE ROSARIO: Simple. I have Puerto Rico's name on my chest.

Q. Good afternoon, Yadier and Eddie. When Puerto Rico's team plays, Team Rubio plays. As a fan of Double-A and Big League baseball, when your team wins, you feel this excitement, but this excitement that was felt yesterday here at Hiram Bithorn was different. Puerto Rico stood up, everything stops. How does it feel to have that name of Puerto Rico? What does it mean for you guys to have that mother country pride?

YADIER MOLINA: Honestly, I've played many World Series. I've had a chance of playing a lot of World Series, and I've been in all six editions of the Classic. I think that the Classic is a feeling, like Eddie says, to have Puerto Rico's name on your chest and to play before the fans, the family is something that's unique.

I think that every player, every coach, as well as myself on my part now, doing my job as a coach, as a manager, it's a wonderful feeling. What we went through yesterday, what we've been through the last few Classics, it's something wonderful that's a model for the children of Puerto Rico, for the people of Puerto Rico to see these talented kids that are representing them, and it's a beautiful feeling to me.

EDDIE ROSARIO: As Yadi says, we've been together day after day in the past, and we've won World Series, but it is a big difference because, when you're little, the first time that I saw a World Baseball Classic, representing Puerto Rico means everything to us. We lived here. We were raised here. We're born and raised here in Puerto Rico.

For us, it's way too special to represent Puerto Rico and to have that name on our chest.

Q. Eddie, following that same line as to what it means



to represent Puerto Rico, you're one of the few players that have represented us since 2013, being present in four World Baseball Classics. Talk to me about the difference from 2013 to this event in 2026 after that first game?

EDDIE ROSARIO: I think that 2013 was kind of my debut, my first game in the Big Leagues. It was right here in the Big Leagues against Venezuela at Hiram Bithorn, and it was the most exciting day of my life. I had a great play in the seventh inning that I was able to catch the ball at the fence, and to feel the yelling that I felt inspired me to keep on firing and keep on representing the island of Puerto Rico.

Thanks to that Classic, I had the privilege of sharing with great ballplayers and learning from them, and now I feel proud because nowadays the guys see me and they learn from me, and they ask from my advice, and that's what we're here for.

I'm very thankful for the career that I've had and the four Classics that I've been able to play at.

Q. Eddie, maybe you saw Caminero's celebration after his home run last night. You guys had a lot of emotion after your hits during the fifth inning yesterday. What does it feel like to celebrate in the World Baseball Classic compared to doing something in the Major League season?

EDDIE ROSARIO: I think it's because it's the clubhouse. Everybody is Puerto Rican, everybody is together, we want to celebrate every out, every run. We're together on everything. That's why we're jumping, and we celebrate everything.

Q. You bring the pride from a lot of Guayama people, especially the youth. How do you feel when people see you, they're so proud of you?

EDDIE ROSARIO: I am, I'm proud that I'm from Guayama because I was the last ballplayer that reached the Big Leagues after Ricky Bones. I always mention Guayama because I want those kids who play baseball in Guayama to think like I do and want them to be like me. That's what's on my mind. That's why I always mention Guayama. I'm proud of Guayama. That's my town.

Q. Eddie, following the line of previous questions, you played in 2013 and 2017. How do you compare those two times to what you're living through with this group?

EDDIE ROSARIO: When we got together the first day, I

told the guys to look at 2013, look at the roster, and see what happened. As much as you have big names on the team, that means nothing. You have to show it on the field.

Someone showed me in 2013 that he could take it to the finals. We have Martín Maldonado who has taken his team to World Series, and I want to take my team with a great tournament.

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