

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

Darell Hernaiz

Eduardo Rivera

Postgame Press Conference



Puerto Rico 4, Panama 3

Q. Two questions. Darell, obviously, how did you feel hitting a walk-off home run, which is the first one in Puerto Rico and never one in the Classic, and today there were two. Today did versatility win for Puerto Rico?

DARELL HERNAIZ: I feel blessed. I'm not a batter to take it out of the park. I get hits, and I run the bases, but that's what God wanted today. I just did the swing, and God did the rest.

YADIER MOLINA: As I told the guys after the game, quick meeting from day one, we said that this team has a lot to win -- versatility, unity. And today all of the players that are on the roster were able to do something for this team to win.

We're so happy with these guys. We did the hard work. It wasn't easy. Panama played way too good. Credit to them. Obviously these guys put up a fight, and with the last inning of the night, we celebrated.

Q. Darell, I want you to talk to me about what you felt and the emotions you ran around the bases. When you got to third, the whole stadium was excited at that time. Eduardo, a question to you. It was incredible action that you had today, four innings and the run that you allowed. How did you feel representing Puerto Rico?

DARELL HERNAIZ: It's something that's unforgettable truly because I don't know how to say, but I blacked out, I don't remember anything. I just remember that I hit the ball into the field, and Eddie was in front of me yelling and jumping.

After that, I completely blacked out because, as I said, I don't hit it out that much, but I didn't expect that. After that, I don't recall anything else. I don't really recall that much. I just know that around third base Joey Cora hugged home and after that I was getting home.

I thought about Eddie again and the previous Classic where he did the step back and jumper, and I did it. I don't recall anything else.

EDUARDO RIVERA: Look, I feel super thankful with Yadier Molina for giving me a chance to have this wonderful game, I feel, with a lot of emotions. Really I have no words to describe what I did today.

This is going to change a little my career. It's something that I did it for Puerto Rico. I did it for my family. I did it for my daughter, who I love very much, for my dad, who's the best in the world. I'm super thankful to Puerto Rico for giving me that ovation when I came out of the game.

Q. Yadier, there were a lot of changes that maybe didn't work during the game, but talk to me to have Martin Maldonado hitting. Then he tied the game.

YADIER MOLINA: Yeah, we talked about it. It was a left batter with a left-handed pitcher. Martin is one of those guys who in tournaments shows his face for Puerto Rico. To get him out at that time, too many emotions.

I love a fighter, and that's what I did. Martin responded, and we were able to tie the game. We're going to make decisions based on our instincts. Today it was a night of instinct. Like I said, in the beginning, everybody brought something for this victory to happen. I'm very happy with these guys.

Q. Yadier, a 2-1 game in the ninth inning. Their pitcher was not having a lot of control. Talk to me a little bit about the advantage of Matthew that really in the case of Matthew he had failed in the previous at-bat and then the count got full. These are young guys for the first time in this game, full stadium, the pressure that



the game is 2-1. Talk to me about those two events and how guys reacted.

YADIER MOLINA: This morning we had a meeting at the hotel, and we talked about controlling our emotions. These are guys who have not had experience in this kind of event. I think that emotions are very important, and they did great adjustment in terms of controlling emotions. They allowed the pitcher to pitch, and we were able to tie the game in that ninth inning.

I believe that that adjustment they made led us to win the game. So the ninth inning with the adjustment that they made, how patient they were, did help us win.

Q. Today you talked about how this WBC in 2013 felt like the start of his Major League career. Hoping that's the same for you?

DARELL HERNAIZ: 100 percent. I'm trying to establish myself in the Big Leagues, and hopefully I get to do that this year. It's one of the reasons I want to come and perform on this stage. I think it sets up for the future. No Big League game is going to feel too big after experiencing something like this.

It's an unbelievable experience. Thank you to Yadi for trusting me and keeping me in the game. He could have subbed me out at any point, and he trusted me to hit. I wouldn't be mad at him if he took me out. He trusted in me, and that meant a lot.

I'm just glad that I could give back to all Puerto Rico and to Yadi for trusting me. Yeah, hopefully that's a sign of things to come, especially myself in the Big Leagues this year. Yeah, God willing.

Q. To follow up, Yadi, why did you have that faith in him?

YADIER MOLINA: You see what he did tonight (laughter). You know what, we spend a lot of times studying our guys to prepare ourselves as a team, and we have the talent, and we have a group of guys that cares. He's one of those guys that care about the team, and he's here for a reason.

Q. You connected the home run to the victory, what were you looking for? How does this rank in your career? How is the locker room right now? How do you think the victory will affect or improve the path of the Puerto Rico team?

DARELL HERNAIZ: Number one by far, as I said, I don't take it out of the park. It's the biggest swing of my life. The second question, what was it?

Q. What was your work plan for that at-bat?

DARELL HERNAIZ: I was looking to drive the ball. I could hit a double for Eddie, to be able to make a hit and score. Fill in the gap, not just a little hit, make it a double, fill in the gaps.

Q. How is the Puerto Rico locker room now, and how will this victory trace the path for Team Rubio?

YADIER MOLINA: The entire team in the locker room is very happy for this victory. It's a big deal, and to get it the way we did makes it special.

Obviously this is not over. We have an off day tomorrow to rest, but man, we're happy. We're happy with our victory. It was a fabulous game. It was a game with a lot of emotions. What can I tell you? I'm really happy for it.

Q. One of the players that was super key in the field was MJ Melendez blocking first base. Talk about the trust that you have in your team with Melendez on first base in that position. Talk about the trust that you have and the versatility you have.

YADIER MOLINA: What can I say? As I said in the beginning, this team has to do a lot of things. We need to defend, and we need to pitch, and we score runs and trust the guys what they can do.

It was MJ, but we also did a previous play that was exciting, and it was important in the game. Also, the shot of Cortes to home, we did a lot of things that were positive as a team. Everybody put in their grain of salt there, and I feel very happy because the team responded and we were able to get the victory.

Q. Yadi, how difficult is it to make these moves and get out Nolan Arenado? With that decision, first of all, the leadership to accept a change like that?

YADIER MOLINA: We don't have egos here. There are no egos. We're all ready for this. That obviously if Cortes gets a hit, he's slower than me (laughter).

Obviously, these are decisions that we have to make, decisions that, if s--- happens, fine. If they're bad, they're bad. I'm the guilty one here.

But we've got to take a risk. We need to trust, and we need to get ready, and we are ready. We don't make half-hearted decisions. We make it with a lot of thought. Thank God we're ready for all this, and going to win the championship.

Q. Yadi, in your career you were known as one of the best late-game situational hitters. Any conversation before his at-bat that led to that success?

YADIER MOLINA: I don't think I speak with you, right?

DARELL HERNAIZ: No, he didn't, but I would say about three or four people told me, hey, just hit it out. Just send us home.

YADIER MOLINA: I think I got mad because it was a double play (laughs).

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