

World Baseball Classic: Pool A - Colombia vs Cuba

Sunday, 8 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

Team Cuba

German Mesa

Yariel Rodriguez

Ariel Martinez

Postgame Press Conference



Cuba 7, Colombia 4

Q. I have two questions, one for German, the other for Yariel. German, this team started in Taiwan 0-2, and now you go to Puerto Rico two years later, and you're 2-0. What position do you think you're in right now in taking this momentum and keep on advancing within this tournament?

GERMAN MESA: Well, we are in conditions of keeping on working and working on. That was the idea. That was the plan from the start. I talked in the beginning with you guys, and I said we started from the bottom, and this is an advantage. All we have to do is keep on working and focusing.

Q. You've reached 16 strikeouts, and you're a leader in the World Baseball Classic in strikeouts. If you know about that fact and how you've worked with the Colombia batters.

YARIEL RODRIGUEZ: I really didn't know that fact, but I'm learning. That's not really my focus. My focus is to go out in the game after the hitters and try to get them out and get a zero in the inning.

Q. Ariel, before this tournament, the World Baseball Classic 2026, you've been criticized a lot that you were not batting in the event with the Cuba team, even though you were having a great trajectory in your career in Japan. Did you do anything different in preparation for this world Classic?

ARIEL MARTINEZ: No. I always try to get ready in the off-season and be strong because in Japan the seasons are very long, and you need to have a good capacity. I also need to work a lot. That's what I do in the off-season.

The other World Baseball Classic was the same stage, and I did the same thing. Basically, I did the same thing, but now I came to learn it was important to the team, that the team needs me to achieve these victories. That's why I have the mentality to help the team 100 percent. Thank God we're having good results.

Q. Who will be the pitcher tomorrow for the team, the game against Puerto Rico that people are going to be watching on TV over there in Cuba?

GERMAN MESA: That would be Robaina. Robaina is going to be the pitcher for Puerto Rico.

Q. And what is your plan? Are you going to keep the same players in the lineup? Is there going to be any change?

GERMAN MESA: Up until now, we were thinking about keeping the same players in the lineup. They're doing it right. All they needed was confidence, and they've had it. You saw what the results have been.

Q. German, 2-0, but at the same time, nothing is guaranteed right now. There's like a few mini tournaments with Puerto Rico, with Canada, and you three -- out of you three, there won't be two that go to the next round. How are you going to do that? Are there any pitchers not available for Puerto Rico?

GERMAN MESA: Well, there are 15 pitchers. Each one has their own role. The ones pitching in these first few games, logically they may not pitch against Puerto Rico. There is a strategy that we have set, and we have been following it up to the dot.

It has been fruitful for them. With the discipline and the seriousness we have, I think we can advance to the next round.

Q. German, tomorrow the team -- the game with Puerto Rico, following that line, both teams have faced each other before in different international



tournaments, but in the World Classic, since then it hasn't happened. Talk to us a little bit about that rivalry and what you expect from the game in Puerto Rico.

GERMAN MESA: Well, the rivalry, we were rivals with all the opponents. Puerto Rico, as I said before, we're going to stick to a plan that is the way we've been working, continuing with that work plan, which has given us good results, and we want to have a positive result.

Q. German, two questions on pitching. The first, was the original plan to use Yariel Rodríguez as the pitcher? Why did you leave Emmanuel Chapman in after he was struggling?

GERMAN MESA: Within the team he's a very important pitcher, and the plan is to use him in the middle of the game, which is where the baseball game is decided. Having a pitcher of his quality, we're using him and have him pitch two, three innings, six outs, whatever, to hold the opponent, which is what we did. We had to bring him in a little bit ahead, but that was the plan, bring him as a pitcher.

He was the one who is going to continue because we need to stop the opponent, and we placated them. For us to continue making runs and make it easier.

In the case of Chapman, I gave him the chance. I have a lot of trust, and you saw that the previous time. He came with two outs, so he wasn't able to complete. This time I gave him a lot of trust. They need confidence and trust, I just gave it to him.

Tomorrow if he has to go out, he'll come out.

Q. You were mentioning about the pitchers. You have a few restrictions today. Colombia's hitting could have been a little bit better, and the game would have been different. How are you seeing it in terms of what's going to happen tomorrow? Talk to us about the environment, what you see and what you expect tomorrow in terms of the audience.

GERMAN MESA: Well, the game gave me a chance to use pitchers in the way we had planned it. I mean, we did hope to advance one or two pitchers instead of pitching another one like Romero at that time. Then we kept on with the plan.

The environment here is very positive. The guys are incredibly -- they're having great fun in the ballgame, and that's where we came from very seriously, and we got the result. Mostly with the positive attitude they're having with

the games and this brotherhood they live within the team. That is fundamental for a team to move forward.

Q. How has it felt to pitch for Cuba again, and what of the changes you were working on in Spring Training, what has worked here for you on the mound?

YARIEL RODRIGUEZ: Yes. To me it's very important to pitch for Cuba. To me it's always been pride to have those four letters on my chest and represent my people, which is the most important thing.

I think since Spring Training I'm working on some things that were hurting me, but nothing big. I think these changes have been quite positive for me, and I'm going to keep working on that to keep the season the same.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports