

# World Baseball Classic: Pool A - Cuba vs Puerto Rico

Monday, 9 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

## Team Puerto Rico

### Yadier Molina

### Christian Vázquez

### Nolan Arenado

## Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Yadier, I was wondering about whether the team had been able to scout other teams. Today is such an important game. What else do you know about Cuba? If you can tell me what else you know about the pitcher and about the particular players or any kind of analytics you have?**

YADIER MOLINA: Hello. Yes, we had an advance scout that was looking at all of the games. Obviously we needed to be prepared, and we've done so. We've done a good job with all the teams, even with Cuba.

Like I said, with Cuba, we've always respected their game style, and we know what they can bring to the field. As I've always said, we are concentrating on ourselves, on our game, and we're ready for them.

**Q. Talk to me about the impact that Kiké had in the dugout, what he did with the players and all that.**

YADIER MOLINA: Kiké, I'm really happy to have seen him here. Although his time was short with us. I would have loved to have him for a lot longer. He's a great human being. He's a wonderful teammate. He helped these guys to get ready to play with confidence, and I think that that is very important.

I think that the message that we're taking, giving to these young guys is very important because they are the future of our team. I believe that's what Kiké did.

**Q. For tomorrow's game, no starter has been mentioned. What can you tell about that? Are you going to wait for today's result?**

YADIER MOLINA: Obviously we're concentrating on today. We don't have a starter for tomorrow. We obviously



have an idea, but I would like to see what happens today and then make a decision.

**Q. Yadi, the environment in the game against Panama was wonderful. The fans saw a treasure of a game. What do you expect for tonight?**

YADIER MOLINA: The same. The mood is going to be way high again. I know this is a game that places us in the next round. We know how important the game is. We're prepared, and we know that the fans are supporting us. We know that it's going to be another game. It's going to be tougher.

As I said, we're very ready. We're focused. We know that today we will have a chance to pass through to the next round.

**Q. The strategy with Rivera, it's an important game. Do you have any other limitation on the organization, or are we going to go with the 65 pitches of the tournament?**

YADIER MOLINA: The organization has 55 pitches, same with Eduardo Rivera. We're counting on as many pitches as possible. We obviously have a full bullpen. We're going to see what game we're going to get, but yes we do have restrictions.

**Q. Outside of this tournament, what can be done on this island to have more control over the future of baseball?**

YADIER MOLINA: We need more support from Major League Baseball and continue helping us financially. We know the economy is what moves everything, and we need to put a little more money in the sport here in Puerto Rico to help us keep on growing and helping these kids. I think with the help of the government obviously and having facilities.

Here in Puerto Rico, there are a lot of parks that haven't been repaired since Maria. We need to give a little TLC to the sport. Everyone talks about education and health, but



we need to talk about the sports also. We need to help it, and we need to move it forward.

**Q. Good afternoon. The question is for Yadier and for the players also. A lot of athletes do not have the chance of representing their country in professional sports when you think about the Olympics and so forth. For you guys this is a real chance, a great chance. Talk to me about how do you place that in the context compared to what happened on Saturday. I know you're thinking about today's game, but Saturday was impressive for the country. It was exciting. Put that in context with the opportunity to represent Puerto Rico and how people respond and now they get it.**

YADIER MOLINA: We know what we have on the line. We know that we do have a lot of chances as a country, as a team, and we're thinking game by game, but we also know that those opportunities are close. We know that we are ready to give that happiness to the country, that joy to be able to win the championship. That is a goal, to be able to take Puerto Rico to an Olympics, which is also very important.

To get that chance, we're very focused on that, and what can I say? The fans would love that to happen. Let's hope that can happen.

CHRISTIAN VÁZQUEZ: Adding to what Yadi just said, I think that obviously the way they have the front of that jersey is worth a lot. So it doesn't really matter what it says on your jersey on the back. What's important is what it says on the front.

We as Puerto Ricans take that very serious. We see there's a lot of children looking up to us, and they're going to step into our shoes when there's another Classic, and we're going to have to keep on being a role model. So it has a weight, and we do take that very seriously.

NOLAN ARENADO: For me, Saturday was pretty eye opening to see the country come together and to see the passion and love. The game was over, and there are still like just as many people there from the first pitch. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. It means so much.

The style of baseball that's played here, it's about winning, and I wish more teams, and I wish the game was more like this, that feeling that all that matters is if you contribute to the win because that's how you get the best out of people, and that's how everyone buys in.

I didn't get a hit. I just got a sac fly and I made a diving play, and the way they were treating me was like I hit a walkoff home run. It's incredible what they do out here.

And how they feel about the game. They pay attention to the little details, and it's eye opening.

**Q. Together with Alex Cintron, you're one of the only players who has a chance of seeing Cuba after the last defeat in 2006. Puerto Rico and Cuba has never faced off in a World Classic. Talk to me about the feelings of this game for you specifically. Before you answer, Nolan, Latin inheritance with Cuban father, Puerto Rican mother, you participated for the U.S. Can you make a comparison of what you experienced on Saturday with the Puerto Rican fans and the U.S. fans?**

NOLAN ARENADO: Obviously it's a little bit uncomfortable for my family just a little bit because of how much Cuba means to them, but at the same time, it's not personal. I'm very faithful to my Cuban roots, but it's just business, and I'm here representing my Puerto Rican roots that I'm really proud of also. I'm proud of both.

At the end of the day, it will probably be a little uncomfortable at times, but I know my dad is going to want me to get hits and hit the ball hard and take care of business, and that's what I'm going to do.

It's a joy to be here. It's a joy to play against them. That's what the beauty of this game is. You get to play against all these countries. Your family starts to feel it. And with Major League Baseball, you want to win, but when it comes to countries, you feel it with all your heart.

YADIER MOLINA: In terms of having played against Cuba, obviously having a defeat that makes it more personal. We know it's a difficult game. We know that the team of Cuba is undefeated and we know it's a strong game, and we're ready for them too.

**Q. My question is for both of you. We saw the video of Edgar Martinez with the team. How important is it for you guys to have a person like Edgar, a Hall of Famer, to keep on fighting your hitting even if you are veterans in this?**

CHRISTIAN VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, I think it was spectacular to see that video. And also, we have an incredible elite staff, with Edgar Martinez, Carlos Beltran, Delgado, a lot of stars that this country has brought forth, and we are privileged. We're very privileged hearing them.

We feel like students in a classroom and being all years for them to have a staff like that.

**Q. Nolan, being around all the Major Leaguers and future Hall of Famers and Hall of Famers, how important has that been for you in terms of elevating**

**your game and what you're going to bring back to camp, especially with your new team?**

NOLAN ARENADO: Yeah, I think with these guys, when you're surrounded by greatness, you have to take it in. They've all been super generous with their time with hitting. They're all around the cage. They're all there to help you. They'll eat with you. They'll drink with you after the game. They'll do anything.

It's a rare thing to see, but it shows you how much they care about the team. I'm just trying to soak it all in and do a lot of things. It's unbelievable. Like he said, it feels like you're in a classroom with a teacher. And I'm just thankful for all of them.

**Q. Nolan and Christian, just a little more about Saturday night after the win. What did that feel like having the crowd stay there and sing the song Preciosa? Have you ever experienced something like that before?**

NOLAN ARENADO: No, not quite like that. Obviously I've played in some big games in this tournament, and it's gotten really loud. There's something different about doing it here and seeing the joy and the singing after. It's hard to really explain and put into words the feeling that they have. It's something you don't see.

I'm so thankful to be here. I'm glad I made that decision. Saturday for me just watching the joy, I came here for that. All the guys warned me it was going to be like that, but that exceeded my expectation for sure.

**Q. Last year the WBC played against Cuba in Miami. It was a totally different environment. What is the difference with the atmosphere for tonight, and what do you remember about that game?**

NOLAN ARENADO: It was a very tense game. In Miami obviously, some political things going on, a little uncomfortable. Here it's going to be business as usual. The goal is to go out and win. You try to put those things aside.

Like I said, my family is going to be a little emotional about both, but at the end of the day, I'm here to help us win a ballgame, and it's a big game. We'll be ready to go.

**Q. A few days ago, Kiké was saying how important it was to play in the World Baseball Classic and he's played in several World Series and won three, and he says that the World Baseball Classic means a lot more. You are in the World Baseball Classic. I want you to tell me what does it feel to represent Puerto Rico?**

CHRISTIAN VÁZQUEZ: I've been asked that several times. I think nothing compared to the World Baseball Classic, the emotion, the excitement of the event, and how important it is to wear this Puerto Rico jersey. It's very exciting.

Obviously to represent Puerto Rico, my family, all of the children of Puerto Rico, all of the young people who may be in my shoes one day, and I think that's the most important thing that you have to have in these games.

Obviously we want to win, but the most important thing is for the children to see us representing Puerto Rico, and that's the most important thing. I think that nothing beats a World Series other than the World Baseball Classic. A lot of excitement and things happening in our mind. Really nothing like the WBC.

**Q. On Saturday you played at first and went to the dugout and then you went back behind the plate. How do you feel physically? Tell me a little bit what you saw in Eduardo Rivera.**

CHRISTIAN VÁZQUEZ: That helps Yadi, for him to have the versatility in the infield and to catch. I really like to get ground balls. I don't mind.

Yeah, I caught for Eduardo in the off-season with the Cangrejeros de Santurce in the winter, incredible talent and the fastball was electric. We did get a lot of swings and misses with the fastball and also with the split. It was a really great job by him.

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