

World Baseball Classic: Pool A - Canada vs Puerto Rico

Tuesday, 10 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

Team Puerto Rico

Yadier Molina

José Rosado

Fernando Cruz

Pregame Press Conference

Q. In the first game in the press conference, you were asked you brought in a closer in a game that was not necessary, and you said it was part of the plan. I suppose that nowadays, today it's part of the plan. Tonight is the team going with everything or thinking about the quarterfinals in Houston or are you going to reserve some players knowing that, so everybody is stronger?

YADIER MOLINA: Yes. Good afternoon to everyone. Answering about this kind of tournament, there are a lot of restrictions. Thinking about Sugar, if you pitch one day, you need to rest the next. Just like Fernando, just like the guys who are pitchers in organizations. They have those restrictions from their team. Whoever pitched yesterday, who are a union, they have to rest today.

Having said that, we have a team that we trust all of the guys that are available. We have a different lineup for today. We have a strategy that has to be executed, and obviously we're going to come out with everything to win this game.

Q. Hello. Talk to me about the work with the pitchers specifically. It's noticeable the work that you have done the effectiveness of the team. Was something specific done? Have you worked on some kind of adjustment, focused approach? What has been successful with this team?

JOSÉ ROSADO: There is a plan. We set some goals, and at all times there has been preparation, but this preparation is not from just last week. Rather this is work of a lot of passion. Credit to Martín Maldonado, José, Juanchi Nieves, all of the coaching staff, likewise Christian Vázquez. We are talking about players who are 100 percent committed.



Even during the winter league in Puerto Rico, we're 100 percent ready for what we're facing.

There was always a plan here, and the focus was to go out here prepared to the field. So on my part, everything having to do with -- everything that was achieved has been done because of that work. So there's no doubt that the guys, that those keys, those pitchers who go out to compete, they are ready, and that's our job as coaches to prepare them so they can be in a position where they can be successful.

Q. Yadier, in the case of the next round, the quarterfinals, prospectively, things you would like to see with the group doing differently? I wouldn't like to say better because you guys have been winning. Is there something you would like the guys to add on maybe in terms of mood, tactical intensity? I don't know. Something that you as a coach would like the team to go up in or increase at this stage?

YADIER MOLINA: I'll tell you that we have really good chemistry. Honestly, the chemistry is really important. I've said it a lot during these press conferences, and I want to keep it. I want to keep this good chemistry within the clubhouse and improve the offense a little bit.

But we need to keep this group together, keep that mindset. These kids are ready for this. They know that there is a goal, and the goal is not completed yet, and I understand that keeping with that chemistry will help us.

Q. The team management confirmed José Orlando Berrios for the second round. Is he considered to start the first game of the second round? In that stadium in Houston that you know, how does it benefit Puerto Rico in terms of pitching and batting?

YADIER MOLINA: Well, we have a plan. Seth Lugo is going to start that day, and we can count on him, at the same time that we got the news of Orlando, really good news for us. We were going to have that plan with him. Cheito is in contact with José, and we're going to carry out



that plan.

I think we're going to see him pitching that same day. That's the goal, but there's nothing official yet. We have that in our plans. We're talking about it.

Obviously having Seth Lugo and Orlando Rios in the same game, it's really good. It gives us a lot of planning to have the bullpen ready. I think that we have a really good chance.

In terms about the stadium, it's not an advantage for either/or. It's a small stadium where the ball can travel anywhere. It's a stadium that there could be a lot of noise also because it's an enclosed stadium. I haven't played there for a while, but I think there's going to be a lot of fans.

Excited to play in Houston and see what can happen. We're going to be ready for everything.

Q. Fernando, welcome. I would like you to talk to us a little bit about the dynamics of what do you do after the game on the field? Do you get together? Do you make a prayer thanking for the victory? Talk to us a little bit about this ritual that this group has done and that the fans appreciate?

FERNANDO CRUZ: We know this is the land of the lamb. We know our gifts and abilities were given to us by God. We are blessed with our abilities and our gifts, and we give the glory and honor to God. This came out organically. It wasn't something we planned. The first day at the end of the game, we decided to get together in the middle of the world to thank the Lord and to be thankful, as we've always been.

It was something very organic. Nothing was planned. A prayer before the game is planned, but not the one after the game. It was something organic that just came because we know our gifts and we know our abilities.

Q. Fernando, talk to us a little bit about the work of the pitching staff in Puerto Rico. It has the best effectiveness throughout the whole tournament, and it's been part of it. Tell us, you've seen the young guys, how could they prepare for this moment?

FERNANDO CRUZ: The guys accept the challenge to compete really. This is an event to compete. It's not an event to be perfect. It's to be willing and to compete and not fear the stage, the moment.

They've come out. They've wet their feet. And we saw Elmer Rodríguez being a little anxious in the first inning, but afterwards he showed what he's made of. He took the

ball to the people and get to the last innings and win the game.

It's been great dynamics. These guys are very receptive. They're willing to learn. They're hungry. As I said throughout the whole tournament, I said it to all media, I believe in more than talent. I believe that my talent is because of that. I believe more in my desire and my will than in my talent. I believe that's led us to where we are and where we're going.

Q. You played the position of catcher many times in Classics and World Series. Did you always say hello to the batters? If you heard some catchers doesn't like to deal with what some batters put in their hands. I ask this because something happened in another game with USA and Mexico. We had a doubt whether that's normal, that some will say hello -- they will say hello because they don't want to get dirty or because they're not used to it.

YADIER MOLINA: On my part, I always say hello to whoever says hello to me. That's what you get taught at home. It doesn't matter if we are playing our opponent, I don't think a greeting will do any harm.

I saw that, and I think it was bad by the catcher. I don't like it. I would not do it. Each one makes their own decisions, but I don't like it.

Q. Fernando, your career has been really nice. You came from professional baseball, you go to Mexico, and you become a great pitcher in the winter leagues. The last Classic you had a chance to pitch for the Dominican Republic, you get to the Yankees. Do you have a message for all the children and young kids that come to this stadium to look at you guys and that may stumble on their way and get that dream, but that you reach your dreams, what message could you give them?

FERNANDO CRUZ: Well, to place my life in order was the key. I believe that we as baseball players are high-performance athletes. What gives us peace and calmness is having order and having peace in your heart. When you have everything in order, it's how you get the results on the field.

So I think that what made me make those decisions and have the peace that I have was to get to know Jesus, got to know Him 11 years ago, and getting to know Jesus is what allowed me to put everything in order: My marriage, my finances, and my temper. Everything that has to do with a life in order.

It is what gave the results. So to get to know God is what I urge every young man who put their life in order, so the decisions off the field don't affect them on the field.

Q. Fernando, in terms of the bullpen, you guys have been able to close the doors. How much do you guys get motivated with Sugar and you all in the Puerto Rican bullpen?

FERNANDO CRUZ: It's something wonderful we're living through with these guys, not only Sugar and myself, but the guys have done an incredible job to give us the ball. I think they're the ones that deserve the credit. We get the game with the advantage of three, but the ones who did the job and did the work and have to make all the pitches to hand the ball to us are them.

Yeah, we'll do it, but we owe it to them really because they've been incredible. We give them all the credit, and we will continue supporting them and being for them for anything that they need.

The experience for them is going to be wonderful, not only with the Classic of Puerto Rico in their careers and in their lives from now on forward, is not going to be the same because they're going to do great things. They're ready for great things, and they've proven it.

Q. I've got two different questions, one from Yadier first. What has been your impression of Albert Pujols in the Classic, and what do you think about his potential as a manager in the Big Leagues?

YADIER MOLINA: Yes, Albert has done a great job, and he's been doing it from day one in winter ball. Albert is a baseball guy. I think he's going to be in the Big Leagues very soon.

Albert is very knowledgeable, and I like what I'm seeing from him, his seriousness, and I wish him the best. He's my brother. Yes, he's doing a great job, and we'll see him in the MLB soon.

Q. What have you thought about the renewals and renovations and the possibilities of bringing the Classic back again here in Puerto Rico? What do you think about the renovations of the stadium and the future of the Classic in Puerto Rico?

YADIER MOLINA: For my part obviously, to see a stadium that is so full and the renovations that have been done makes me happy. It makes me happy to see them, and for the people to see an event like the Classic, it's what we want for the people of Puerto Rico. The young people deserve this.

For there to be not only a stadium like this, to be able to make a lot more stadiums, a lot more facilities for these kids to have a chance of continuing to grow in baseball. I think that is something very important. But the facilities are great.

Q. José Berrios got the news that he got the clearance to appear in the Classic. What do you expect to get from Berrios?

YADIER MOLINA: Yes, we got the news today, so he's going to be available for the second round. So, yes, he's in. So I'm happy for that news.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports