

World Baseball Classic: Pool A - Canada vs Cuba

Wednesday, 11 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

Team Cuba

German Mesa

Alexander Vargas

Yoel Yanqui

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Good afternoon to all you guys. If you could tell us what changes there were in today's lineup, it's such an important game, and what were those changes based on and those decisions, if you could expand a little bit on that?

GERMAN MESA: Yes, we have made a few changes in the lineup looking for offense. These games -- we're needing offense for these games. We've disregarded it a little, the part of the fielders, the defense, but we're looking for production. We're looking for speed and players who can put the ball in play.

Q. What were the new ones that are coming in? What were those decisions based on?

GERMAN MESA: Well, you have Yoel Yanqui coming in. He's coming in to play first base. Martinez is going to be in the outfield, and then the catcher Andy Perez is coming in.

I'm sorry. I always get confused with you. Alexander Vargas. Alexander Vargas.

Q. German, it's a do or die game. If Cuba doesn't beat Canada -- it's been 16 years, and you've never faced each other in a World Classic until today. Does the history weigh much or not?

GERMAN MESA: Thank you for that fact. I'm going to play the opponent. I'm not looking at the history. It's the moment now. How many, 16? Well, I think it's time to change history then.

We're going to fight. We're going to play ball. Let's see what the field tells us.

Q. Good afternoon. For Alexander Vargas, I imagine



as a kid you dreamt about this moment. We knew you had dreamt about being in the World Classic. Today you have a chance to be a starter for Cuba. How did you feel from Cuba, and how does your family feel?

ALEXANDER VARGAS: We're all excited. Excited with this decision and with today's game. I think my family is more than happy with what's going to happen, and I'm going to give my hundred percent, and let God's will and just stay positive.

Q. What is the plan, the bullpen plan for today?

GERMAN MESA: We have a set plan, and it would be similar as the first day. Moinelo, Yariel, da, da, da, until we give the game to the closer. We're going to advance.

Q. Question for both players. What impressions do you want the world of baseball to take from Cuba at this moment?

YOEL YANQUI: Really on my part, thankful to God, happy to be here, happy to have this chance. I say that it's something that it's a very important game. I know that everyone in Cuba and other places in the world are waiting, expecting our victory, but we're going to go out and give the best of ourselves, and we're going to reach it.

ALEXANDER VARGAS: What I think also that for the kids they should start loving baseball a lot more and that we're going to give them a good result today.

Q. German, can you answer the question? What impression do you want the people to take from Cuba and the fans of Cuban baseball?

GERMAN MESA: Well, the way that we're playing, the way that many thought about our team, I think that they've got to be satisfied and happy with our result. More so with today's game. They should all be very watchful.

For many, I think Cuba has been a surprise. They weren't counting on us to get here, and we're going to keep on giving people surprises. That's all I can say.



Q. Cuba has gone into the second round in every Classic. Canada has never gone to the second round. What pressure can this add to today's game?

GERMAN MESA: Pressure? None. I tell the guys just go out to play, go out and have fun. This is a game. They can't have pressure and thinking about one thing or another. It's what you get. I mean, it's a game, inning for inning, strike for strike. No pressure. Don't think about that.

It's just a game. If you think about that, it's an extra weight. Just go out and have fun. That's all you have to do.

Q. German, is there a change in the catcher, or is Omar staying?

GERMAN MESA: There will be a change in the catcher. Andy Perez is going to be the catcher. Oh, I said it. I did say that.

Q. Andy Perez is the catcher for this game? Was it based on Omar Hernandez's offense or any other part of the game, or did you use any other criteria to substitute him?

GERMAN MESA: Well, Omar has been defending well. Andy is also a defensive catcher, and we're giving the possibility of playing -- of everyone to play.

Sometimes the game gives you changes, makes you change movements and things. These are risks. This is a sport. That's how it is, and we're going to assume all the responsibility.

The ones that are going to be there are going to do it well, and I do have the certainty that they're going to do it right.

Q. For both players, you two came out young from Cuba and you got to see how the previous World Classics went. Did you ever think that you'd be today sitting here playing a World Classic?

YOEL YANQUI: Well, to me in my case, since I got called to represent the country, I said yes. This is a dream for any ballplayer of any country, and I'm just thankful to God to be here. I was given a chance to go out and play in the field, and you're going to -- you can expect the best of me, and we're going to play good today.

ALEXANDER VARGAS: Of course, of course. First of all, thankful to God for the chance. It's a dream come true. It is a dream come true. I don't have many more words to say other than that.

Q. What things are you enjoying of this experience in San Juan this week? What do you think about this experience?

YOEL YANQUI: Well, on my part I've enjoyed this World Classic to the max, playing with my fellow players game after game, and I'm just enjoying the experience.

ALEXANDER VARGAS: It's a really nice experience, something that I've never lived through because I've met up with people that I've played with ever since we were kids and people that I've always admired also. So it's a very wonderful experience.

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