

World Baseball Classic: Pool B

Thursday, 5 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Italy

Manager Francisco Cervelli

Workout Day Press Conference



Q. Francisco, good to see you. Obviously you are from an Italian family, but you were born and raised in Venezuela in a baseball background. What does it mean to you to bring that baseball background from your home country to this managerial position in a country that is still, you know, not as developed as Venezuela?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: [Speaking in Spanish].

Q. When we last spoke you were wearing catcher's equipment. We were in Guadalajara. It was in the midst of that incredibly exciting 2017 pool in Jalisco. Now you are the manager. I was wondering if you can reflect on what it means to take this journey wearing the Azzurri (phonetic) representing Italy.

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: It means a lot for me. As a player I did it. I was born in Italy. You have to respect your jersey, and Italy gave me an opportunity in 2009. I repeated in 2017.

I start with this job, because it is not only World Baseball Classic. It is Italian baseball. I live there. I experience the passion. I am learning, still learning. But it means a lot because I think as a coach, you are here to help. You are here to help and get the best you can for every player and put Italy on the map. It is not always soccer. We have to put Italy in baseball as well.

Q. You may have just been asked this. In English what kind of role do you see for Zach Dezenzo in this pool?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: It will be a little bit of everything. When I spoke with his manager, he talked amazing things about him. He will be at third base and of course outfield and he also can play first.

We had a thing with a lot of guys who can play multiple positions. The most important, I need his bat in the lineup. He's a big leaguer. He is a great player. And we are going

to need Zach.

Q. What would it mean for the future of Italian baseball if your team makes a deep run in this World Baseball Classic?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: It means a lot. That's what we are looking for. We put this team together with the young guys to have probably the same guys for the next three Classics, four Classics.

But for Italy it means a lot. We need to -- we got the favorites. We got USA, Japan, Venezuela, Dominican. All the eyes are on those teams. And of course Mexico. It's a great team.

We need to put Italy on the map. It is not that we need, we want it because it is good for the hope over there in Europe. It is not only Italy; it is all of Europe. It is hard to play baseball over there because of the winters. But if we get good results a lot of things happen. We are going to open a lot of eyes and opportunities. It just comes easier.

Q. How has the increased media attention been since the nice run that you made in the European Baseball Championship back in Italy?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: It has been amazing. In the beginning I spoke with my players, because no one believed when we went to that tournament, no one believed. I had a young team. The last European we end up nine. No one believe in anything.

I told them, by the end of this tournament you are going to have a lot of people around. That's what happened. In the last game, when we were stretching, it was a lot of fans just watching what they were doing, because it was fun. They were dancing. They were celebrating every victory.

So I think, you know, confidence and good things come after results. It's life, you know. If you always have negative result, no one is going to follow.

But we try to build something very powerful here. It is



going to take time. But since that European, everything has been changing. And I am looking forward to keeping it that way.

