

World Baseball Classic: Pool B

Thursday, 5 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Italy

Vinnie Pasquantino

Workout Day Press Conference



Q. What has Francisco brought to the team as a manager in the few days he's on the team?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: I think the biggest thing he brought is relationship with the Italian players. With him doing so much work over in Italy and in Venezuela with these guys, it has been incredible. He has been able to bridge the gap for the Italian-Americans to create a relationship with these guys.

I think that's the biggest piece, the way he communicates, he communicates to everybody the same. He is able to bring guys together and bridge that gap. That's the biggest thing I have seen.

Q. I asked Francisco the same question. Chances on making it to the next round? Everybody has Team USA and Mexico as a shoo-in for 1 and 2. What do you think Italy can do in this group stage?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: There's no way I can answer that question. Like, oh, we are going to win the pool. We will find out in a few days.

I think those two are probably the betting favorites, I would have to assume. But it is baseball. It doesn't matter.

We have talked about it a lot. If you look at our schedule it is easy to pigeonhole the last two games as the biggest two for us. If you don't take Brazil seriously or the United Kingdom seriously, if you are 0-2 going into the games doesn't matter anyway.

For us, it's take it at a time, treat every one the same and look up at the end of the week and you advance.

As far as speculating, I think that would be pointless for me to do. Nothing good can come from saying anything like that.

Q. With Team USA, probably the most famous player is the team photographer, Ken Griffey Jr. What's your

earliest recollections you have of him, whether in a game or video or on TV?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Just that swing. I always tell kids don't watch him swing. Don't try to emulate that. It is a one-of one.

Watching him play growing up, the plays he would make in center field, it was video game like for me because I knew I would never be able to do anything like that. He is one of your heroes just because the things he was able to do are second to none.

It's cool he is taking pictures for them now for them. That is super cool. He just did an event with Michael Lorenzen and Jac Caglianone. They tried some food the other day when they were with Ken. It's cool he is still in the game and giving his time to give back to us.

Q. (Indiscernible) was part of the tournament in 2023 and came back and probably had a chat with a few of these guys. How many of them are coming to you saying, I want to play for Team Italy?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: A good amount. The first one was Zach Dezenzo. How do you say white tank top? I sent him over -- that Italians are known for wearing. I found out that he was in. We confirmed he was in, and I sent him over one from the visitor's clubhouse and said, welcome to the team. That was my first gift to somebody for playing for this team. It is cool it happened in this building.

Yeah, I worked the phones quite a bit this offseason trying to get guys to commit and realize how cool of an event this is and what a bond you can build with a lot of guys that you will never get to take the field with again.

We were talking a lot. I feel like -- this is my second classic. I think there is four of us that this is our consecutive one. And Adam Ottavino played in 2009 with Italy. It is cool to do it again and cool guys are doing it for the first time.



Q. You talked about Zach Dezenzo being the first to commit to Italy. What can you tell us about getting to know him, and what do you think he brings to the team?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Based on the BP he just showed he brings a lot of power to the team. He is clearly a special player. I have watched him from the other side. I don't like it when he is hitting when I am playing defense. I will like watching him from the dugout.

He will bring power to the other side. He brings really good defense. He's somebody you can lean on as another major leaguer, when guys have questions -- what it is like to play in stadiums, different things that might come up. He is there for everybody.

It seems like he is a quiet, natural leader. And it has been cool to share a clubhouse with him.

Q. Hey, Vinnie, question about Daikin Park. Is it a hitter's park, a difficult place to hit?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: I don't get into these conversations any more. I tried on Twitter this offseason. It didn't work out well for me. Whatever you want to say it is, I will go with. Whatever your opinion is I will give it to you.

Q. What was the (indiscernible) you got into an argument?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Kansas City. The fences are moving in. I don't know how big of a deal it is. I am just a dumb hitter. I am going to hit. I am going to stop thinking about things like that and just try to go and hit.

Q. Can you please tell me, as an Italian-American what it means to reconnect with your Italian heritage?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: It is awesome. I did a piece the other day in Arizona talking about my grandfather. This is all he asked me about. He is a Yankees fan first, because he is from New York. I think he is a Team Italy fan second and a Royals fan third.

Every time I talk to him it's, when are you going to Italy, when are you playing for Italy, when is it happening? He knows how to watch the games, which is really exciting. Having to call him and tell him how to -- I think it is Tubi and FS1 and FS2. That has been fun to explain how to get the streaming services going.

It's awesome. Being able to -- you play for the name on the back a little bit in this tournament because you are

playing for your heritage and for the pride of your ancestors basically. For me it has been cool to dive in.

It was more so in 2023 when we really dove in where my family is from. The real name used to be Pasquantonio (phonetic). It became more American as Pasquantino.

It has been really special to learn those things. I am thankful my grandmother keeps a lot of records because some things would have been impossible to find, like wedding certificates and things like that.

It has been a really cool family event to try to find out all these things about our ancestors.

Q. Quick follow-up. The most important question of all, do you call it sauce or gravy?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Just sauce. My grandmother's sauce. That's all we call it. My dad makes it now.

So it has become a tradition in the family. We just go with sauce.

Q. You are back for a second edition with Italy. In the period since you last played, Italy has had an increasing stream of professional signings out of Italy with MLB teams. The national team recovered from a hiccup and this time made an exciting run --

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: A silver, right? Finished second.

Q. Right. And faced up against the World Baseball Classic team for the Netherlands. What are you hoping between this Classic and the next Classic that Italy, the country, in terms of developing baseball, can say has happened in the intervening three or four years?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: I don't know if it can be as short term as 3 or 4 years, but the goal is for this team to be full of Italians.

I am not naive in the fact that I am Italian-American, and we are trying to represent Italy in the right way. What we are trying to do is open the door for more guys to play -- I think Sam is coming in here after me -- for more guys like Sam more Italian-born major leaguers more guys that can make a competitive team in this Classic.

I think that's the long-term goal, as long as the Classic keeps continuing, for this team to be full of purebred Italians. That's the goal is to open that door and show, hey, Italy has got some ball players and all you have to do is invest in them a little bit, just invest some time equity into

them.

That's what Francisco is doing such a great job of; he is out there all of the time.

What Fibs (phonetic) has done for the last few years has been phenomenal of putting Italy back on the map. We are just a piece of that, trying to extend that branch and get these TV games and show them that it is possible and get these guys some run.

That's our goal here is to open the door for them, hopefully in the next few Classics you can have even more pure Italians.

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