

World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Italy vs Mexico

Wednesday, 11 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Italy

Manager Francisco Cervelli

Postgame Press Conference

Q. We're very proud as Venezuelans to see you here and the way you displayed efforts and whatnot with this team. Based on your plans and your dreams, did you ever see Italy advance to the next phase of this WBC?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: If you can't imagine it, of course won't happen. Of course I did. To think about the 3-1 or 2-2, that was too dangerous, too risky.

Our plans were different, and then they changed. And everything happened the way it needed to happen. We won four games. Well played. It wasn't just out of luck. It was good pitching.

And that was the goal, go game by game. And then 4-0 and you start thinking, why not?

Q. Are they going to make a statue of you in Rome? And how do you measure this? How will you measure this victory, knowing that Italy is a soccer nation, but now doing three home runs ever from a player, a pitcher being phenomenal, how can this impact the growth of the game in Italy, which is still not there yet, professionally speaking. But I'd like to know your opinion. How can you differentiate, right, this win and remain undefeated?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I don't know how to process it, to be honest with you. My emotions are everywhere. Three home runs means you're one of the best batters in the league. They were asking me yesterday if I was worried about him. I said no, I truly don't. Once a batter, always a batter. So he's a leader. He's like the soul of the team.

In regards to the statue, I don't know, there's a lot of statues in Italy, so why have mine up there? I don't want people to be taking pictures or anything like that. I don't want my statue.



I simply want to do what I mentioned last year, that we need to establish an identity with the Italian squad. We initiated this last year. It was changed. We did not win. We were second and this is the Italian way. That probably the guys know, but it's always attack, attack, attack.

Q. Perhaps to many, this is a surprise what Italy accomplished. But reflecting on the past couple years up til now, having been shown as a pitching coach other staffs being added to the team, added to the squad, I'm sure that was all thought of to get to this place. So was it really way back then that you thought this threw? Because there's something new, right? It's always something that's been in process, been worked for?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Well, I can just say a year ago, because that's when I started. I know before that I can speak on their behalf, but I got to Italy a year ago and I felt like they'd forgotten baseball. The guys had no hope. It was pretty hard for me to convince them that this project was legitimate.

Every time we're taking more and more players to the clinics, more coaches to the clinics, we need to reinforce our coaching staff, reinforce so we can get to a more modern baseball and for each player to understand that they can get better.

We need to take more technology -- I'm trying my best to take more technology to the Italian organization because what better way than to use data?

So Marco Mazzieri, who is the president, he's a giant. He was my manager. I consider him family. He gave me this opportunity. He does believe in the process. And you know what, we did fail in the beginning, but we're going to rectify, we're going to rectify again and again. And you continue until you're able to figure it out. You're able to figure it out.

So the Italian way is not defined all the way yet. We want to make a book on how baseball is being played



nowadays, the character of the team on the field and to be able to spread this throughout the world, from Italy to across the world. And this is something that started and is going to continue to be something beautiful later on.

Q. (Indiscernible) during this event? And also have you kind of replicated his style from what you learned from him in your Yankee days?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I don't think anyone can do what he's done in this game. This man is a gentleman. My first time in the big league camp, he was a manager. I haven't heard. I would I love to see him. I got a lot of respect for him.

He taught me so much -- how to be elegant, respectful and be a Yankee.

So that's what I'm trying to do here in Italy. Italy, it's culture, it's elegance, it's art. So my guys, they dress well every day. They respect this. This is the highest level in the world. So why not create a tradition of, like, a Joe Torre tradition, that is respect this game and be a professional inside and outside the field.

Q. Nowadays there's scouting of managers all across the Major Leagues, specifically pitchers, young, that are good with data, being able to speak many languages. I know you speak Italian as well. So people look for that type of profile. Would you ever be interested in coaching in the Major Leagues? Also, everyone is talking about today's results. The Italian team's results. Even on paper Mexico seemed to be not the underdog on paper. Given that y'all were playing kind of like away, you all were like the away team, you still managed to get through. So what did you put on your team, on your players to be able to overcome all these obstacles?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Well, the first question, of course. I have the hopes to coach a Major League team. Why not? I have a great coaching staff as well. I've always been known for asking questions after questions because my coaching staff, they've been here for so many years. They make my job easier.

I'm learning languages. I now speak four. I speak Portuguese. And I'm going to keep learning on more and more because I want to be able to communicate with everyone. Wherever I go I want to be able to speak their language. I like to talk a lot, so something I'm very passionate for. It could be French next. I'm not sure. We'll see. And sometimes it's good to be the underdog.

As for the next Classic, WBC, we may no longer be an

underdog. And that's something bad, too, because everyone is going to have us under a loop.

So we built a roster that took a whole year. Many players couldn't do it for some reason -- restrictions, ABC, XYZ. So this roster became a very young team, very fast team. So we believe that these youngsters will play this year and the next WBC, keeping the same pillars, but bringing in more youngsters. And my job is that I can bring more Italian players being born in Italy to play in this tournament.

Q. Everyone's mentioning the chemistry and the team, and how would you be using that on behalf of the next match? I think there are going to be some changes with your pitchers, if I'm not mistaken.

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Hopefully there's none. Hopefully no one leaves. Some players might think that at first, but once they start seeing what's happening in the tournament, they're not going to want to leave.

And one of the main players that's been able to help us on that is Benny (phonetic), because we were talking throughout the months, right, how are we going to do this? How do we make sure we build good chemistry and all those things?

Benny is the one at the forefront. He's the one doing this. And I hope no one leaves because everyone has great hearts and they're very fun, too.

Q. After everything he's done to boost the chemistry of the team, how nice was it to see Vinnie get those swings and make not just an impact but historic impact at the plate?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: That was nice. Everyone did it the first three games, and we were waiting for this. Mexico is a great team. They've got great pitchers, power, big breaking balls. And this guy came today.

When he showed the bunt, I said something good is going to happen today because he was thinking today about the team, how can we win this game, how we can get on base, and then the guy behind pick him up.

But I think he found himself today. He's a great player.

Q. With Italy winning its group in the WBC for the first time and the emphatic way you won these last two games, what kind of statement does that make about the Italian national team and program?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: There's another team in the world that can play baseball. We've got some other teams

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like, I think, Netherlands in the future will be amazing, and Great Britain. They're growing like crazy.

But now there is another country that could play baseball in Europe. This tournament is so amazing because everybody expected only four teams to make it. But when you've got this kind of surprise, the game grows globally. And I believe that's what MLB is looking for. Put baseball in every part of the world, every corner.

Q. Can you elaborate a little bit when you say this is Vinnie's team, how does he lead? Can you give us some examples of the reason why you say he's your team leader?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I think leaders, they're born like that. This guy, everybody follows him. He respects everyone. He can be loud sometimes when he needs to. He doesn't talk that much. Everybody follows him.

That's a leader. That's a leader. He put himself before everyone to protect everyone, not because it's Vinnie. That's what a captain is.

This guy, he's going to lead this team and Kansas City, when he comes back, because it's natural on him. This is amazing to have. It's a pleasure for me to have a player like that because it makes my job very easy.

Q. Later in the game, every time Mexico mounted what looked like could turn into a big rally, one of your relievers came in and shut it down. Could you speak to the poise of your relief pitchers in this game?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Well, today we were short on pitchers, very short. We had, like, five guys. And whoever came after, did their job.

It was amazing today, when the crowds started getting loud, we tried to stop the game a little bit, you know, because this is a chess game. And that's what we were looking for -- do not let the crowd get crazy because when Mexican fans, when they get crazy, it's loud and the pressure and the energy goes up and their team, they can feel it.

So when everything started getting a little loud, those guys came, get the outs and shut it down. That was the key today. Do not let the fans stand up because they are one of the best fans in the world.

Q. You came from beating the U.S. Tonight you beat Mexico. Next opponent is Puerto Rico, another titan. So if you beat them, then Miami has three titans -- Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Japan, which

they're already there -- even South Korea. So what impressions do your guys have after starting to beat these giants and what's to come?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I think last night's test was something incredible. Last night and tonight. With the top five teams in the world. Then we've got Puerto Rico, with an incredible manager, super smart coaches, one of my idols.

So things are going to get harder and harder. We've got to plan to see how we're going to do it. But everything is done on the field.

And if we go to Miami, we will know who we're going to face. But I'm very, very infused because I went last year as a fan to the WBC to see Venezuela. It was something incredible. I've never seen something like that. So I would like to be inside the field and hear that and experience all that.

Q. Do you consider that perhaps these teams called favorite teams, they underestimated your team, and the humbleness of this Italian team overcame this Group B? And if you could send a message to all the Italian fans in Italian so they can continue to support this team of yours, which are now in the quarterfinals?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I don't know if they underestimated us. They know the quality of players we have on our squad. Now there are statistics for anything. You know who is with who. There are no more secrets anymore.

But maybe would you like to -- you want to ask them, but I know that they were always very respectful. They played tough, but someone is going to beat the other team.

[Speaking in Italian]

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