

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Nicaragua vs Dominican Republic

Friday, 6 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Nicaragua

Manager Dusty Baker

Pregame Press Conference

Q. We would like to know about the changes that you made in the lineup. You had Sandoval, you had Alegria instead of Downs. Talk about these changes that you made in the lineup according to the last games that you played with the team.

DUSTY BAKER: Well, I was changing my lineup every day to try to figure out who was going to be where and who would play the best in this big outfield that they have here. This is probably the largest outfield in baseball, and you need speed, and you need defense. With Downs, I felt that Alegria was swinging better and had more experience as far as playing winter ball. He had more games behind him than Jeter did in Japan because those guys didn't play many games before they got here.

So with the need for offense, I just felt that Alegria was swinging better against left-handers. And I still told Jeter to be ready late in the game for defense, and at any point in time I might use anybody at any time to hit, especially since I have 30 players.

Q. What do you tell guys in terms of being in an environment like this with all the crowd and the pressure and you actually have games that count, and it's a completely different environment than a lot of these guys have encountered?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, a lot of these guys have been in this environment more than I have because I'm a rookie. This is opening day in the WBC. So I came out early to watch the first game, to see the -- and I heard ours is going to be even more rambunctious than the first one. A lot of these guys have been in this environment before.

So the main thing is -- I know what Hank Aaron told me when I first came into the league in this situation. He said, be nervous but don't be scared. Nerves are natural. After the first pitch, it's the same game, whether it's here or in



the park.

Q. Two of the teams in our division, they've had military action, Israel and Venezuela. Is that something people are talking about, or is this all baseball?

DUSTY BAKER: Yeah, it's all baseball right now. There's not a whole bunch that we can do about the political scene in the world. I mean, there's a lot going on, but hopefully baseball is a sanctuary away from the problems at least for a few hours, which I'm hoping that we have peace, keep peace, at least through this Classic.

Q. Why is Dusty Baker coaching the Nicaraguan team? And, two, why did you use the toothpick, and for how many years have you been using that?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, I decided to come and manage Nicaragua because I felt the call. Marvin Bernard called me and Joey Santiago, my good friend, called me. And I had studied recently about Marcus Garvey, who had come to Nicaragua years ago. This is kind of my last opening day because I've seen this on TV, but I've never been a part of it.

And with the toothpick, I was dipping tobacco, and my wife, my daughter, my son, my dentist, they didn't like it, so they told me to start using toothpicks.

Q. What does -- this last opening day that you said it's pretty much already this is, means to you, considering it's special because you are coaching a national team, not a Major League Baseball team. What does being in the World Baseball Classic in this last chance mean to you?

DUSTY BAKER: It means a lot to me because I've never done this before, and there's not a whole bunch in baseball that I haven't done before. So this looks like fun on TV. I played in México, Puerto Rico and Venezuela, and I love the vibe from playing Latin American baseball. There's nothing more exciting than playing in Latin America because the passion, the music, the food, the bantering



back and forth. And plus I played in some towns that always had two teams.

When I played in Puerto Rico, I played for La Guaira -- no, in Venezuela I played for La Guaira, and then they had Caracas. And then in Puerto Rico I played for Santurce, and then they had the Senatores, so it was always fun.

Q. A similar question would be what is your goal for this? What would you consider this to be a success for you and this team in this tournament?

DUSTY BAKER: To win.

Q. To advance, to win a game --

DUSTY BAKER: No, I didn't come here to win a game. My goal is to come here to win. Whether I reach that goal or not, my goal is always to win. My goal is always to win it all.

It's like going for the gold medal. If you don't get the gold medal, then you're satisfied with the silver, and if you don't get the silver, now you want a bronze. All three of them, at least you're on the podium to get something.

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