

# World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Nicaragua vs Dominican Republic

Friday, 6 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

## Team Dominican Republic

### Manager Albert Pujols

#### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Albert, regarding the first round, there is a number of pitches of 65. Cristopher Sanchez has pitched two innings. That number is different for him. Do you have a game plan who will be next in the order of pitchers for this game today?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: Cristopher Sanchez, as you said, he will have 65 pitches. We hope that he can pitch for three or four innings and to execute the game plan that we have for today. I'm not telling you what the plan is, of course; you will see that during the game.

But we are very happy with the plan that we have for today's game.

**Q. You had a lineup in the DR from 1 to 9. Are you keeping the same lineup for all the games, or have you considered changing positions?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: This is the first game of this tournament. We are very happy with the lineup that we defined for today. Let's see what happens today to define the lineup on Sunday. But I would say that this is basically the same lineup that you will see during the tournament.

I hope that they are able to perform the same as they performed in the two exhibition games in the DR. We are very happy with the lineup we have today from the first to the ninth bat.

**Q. Albert, we saw the information today that Erik González is going to replace Jeremy Peña on the DR team. How are you planning to use him, and why did you choose Gonzales?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, we made some calls to different players, and Erik González was available for us. He doesn't have a responsibility with any organization. He's a free agent in México, and the process is faster than for the



MLB. At 4:30 he will be arriving and I hope to see him in the next 15, 20 minutes. But that's the best choice we had. Erik is a great baseball player. He finished the winter league recently, and I think that we found in him the character we were looking for. He's a winner.

How to use him? That depends on the game. It depends on the tournament itself. I'm very excited to have him once again, me as a manager, as a coach, and he will be a key piece for the team.

**Q. After the first exhibition game against the Detroit Tigers, we saw Caminero wearing a shirt. What does that mean for the players, for the whole team, and why did you choose that?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, you should ask Caminero about that. I'm just a coach. I work in the office, and the players are in the clubhouse.

You will see many emotions, especially from our team. At the same time, we're going to be very, very focused because we want to win this tournament once again, as it happened in 2013, to put our names on the pages of history.

All the teams are doing the same. Our players are using that weight. By the way, that's a very interesting question I'm going to ask the guys. They have created something like that to celebrate. This is a game to have fun and to be creative.

**Q. One of your main goals was to deal with the egos of those players, of all those superstars. We have heard so many players speaking about the ego, that they left their ego home, in the drawer. Is that part of the motivation that you transmit to the players, you as a coach?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: You know what, every time you have a lineup or superstars like the ones we have in the team, you could have three or four teams comprised of Dominican players. But we only have 30 in the roster. I haven't seen that ego thing.



Maybe you bring that up, but the guys don't speak about that. They know that it is important to represent our country, to wear that name on the chest. We are all in the same boat. Our goal is to win this championship. They all know the role they are going to play. They all know that in their teams, maybe the lineup is different, maybe they play in different positions, maybe they have a different order, but we are here to represent our country, the Dominican Republic.

And we are very proud of that. We have to thank God for this opportunity to represent our homeland once again.

**Q. This is hour zero for the guys, no longer exhibition games. They left a lot of adrenaline in the DR. How important is it to manage that adrenaline? Of course even when you have fun, to have the fun and games so they don't overreact on the field?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, hour zero came for us a long time ago when we put together this team. This is the first game of the tournament. But from the very beginning, from day one when they started playing, they are aware of this goal that is to prepare themselves for this tournament. They are going to play the ball. It is their show, and you will see that on the field.

They are going to have fun. They are going to respect baseball. This is what I ask from them, to respect the game and our coaching staff, and if we are meant to win this tournament, we will.

We are preparing for this. They are preparing for this. They are ready. I thought that they might be kind of off with the timing, but no. We had two exhibition games in the DR, and they are taking this very seriously.

**Q. I have a similar question. How did you transmit the vibes from the DR to the team to bring it here to the tournament?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: There is no magic. We have great leaders in the clubhouse with Machado, Vlady, Soto. They create their own atmosphere, and this is the atmosphere that they will bring and show on the field. We are going to be here for 12 days in Miami. So you can say this or that, but the atmosphere is created by the players themselves. This show will be seen by millions of fans. Others will be attending the tournament here at the stadium. Their job is to be focused and try to win the championship.

**Q. What's it like to look across the diamond and see a legend like Dusty Baker on the other side managing, and what do you think about him being involved in this**

**tournament at this stage of his career?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: Let me think about this because I'm really humble, obviously, to have an opportunity to go against a legend. I went against him a lot as a player, with Chicago, San Francisco, Cincinnati. I really admire him from the other side. I really admire the way that he went about it, not just as a player but as a manager, as well.

All I hear is just great things about him, how great a manager he was and he is still, and I think that will show you a lot. For a guy with that stat, to be able to come and represent and be the head of Nicaragua and help those guys out and help prepare them for this tournament, that means a lot. He loves the game. He loves to help. I'm really thankful to have a really good relationship with him.

I spent a little time last night over the rules and where we were, and it was fun just to catch up with him. Somebody that I admire, really, and I'm sure that he's going to have those guys ready to go, and I'm sure that's his message.

He's seen our ballclub, and that's not going to scare him or anything. He's going to do his thing, and he's going to prepare those guys and be ready to go in a couple hours here. My job is to have my guys ready to go, and really focus inning by inning and pitch by pitch, and hopefully at the end of the day get the win.

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