

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Israel vs Venezuela

Saturday, 7 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Venezuela

Manager Omar López

Pregame Press Conference

OMAR LÓPEZ: I want to say something before we start. I hope that you can pass this on to journalists from other countries. My name is Omar López. I have been working with baseball for 29 years. I don't work in politics. I didn't go to college to study diplomacy or any other career related to politics. I am not supporting nobody. I support and I am connected with my family and nobody else. So I ask the Venezuelans, the Venezuelan community, please don't ask me more questions about the political situation of my country, of our country. And please, please share this with the other journalists.

I had a question a couple days ago, I don't remember from which newspaper, social media, about my political situation -- Venezuelan political situation. I would not answer anything about it. My name is Omar López and I'm team manager of Venezuela for 29 years as a coach. I didn't go to college. I didn't went to any type of school to be a political or diplomatic Congressman or anything like that. If anybody asks me again that, my answer is going to be, "next question, please." I just want to make that clear.

Okay, vamos. Showtime.

Q. De Jesus is ready to get a second opportunity in the majors. He signed with the Detroit Tigers after playing two years in Korea. He decided to come back. He's going to be your starting pitcher today under those circumstances. How do you evaluate this? And considering what I just said, how did you decide on him to join the team? What was the thinking process?

OMAR LÓPEZ: Ever since I'm in charge of the Classic, Enmanuel was always available to represent Venezuela. I don't see any obstacle for him to be with us. He's representing his country and our team. This time it was the same, no obstacles. He and his agent, Felix Olivo, one of the agents that supported the most while I am in charge of Venezuela, with his situation with the Detroit Tigers was to be as a guest in the roster with the option to be part of the



team. But I have great relationships with the Detroit Tigers, with the general manager and the coach, and there was no obstacles. He was very well-prepared. He will be with us. The process was very easy.

Q. Omar, how is Chourio doing?

OMAR LÓPEZ: Much better. He woke up much better today. We just finished training. I just wanted to know more information. He would go to the cage to make some swings, but I don't have the updated information. But if he did that, it's because he's feeling much better. It is important to remember something about the player. The player himself, especially when you are so young such as Jackson that hasn't been in baseball for so many years, he has no vast experience. When you start something in your life, you don't know to make the difference from bothering, an injury, or something worse. There is a level of tolerance to when something bothers you or something hurts you.

They are two different things. Sometimes the player does not know the difference. I'm not saying that this is the case of Jackson. But I have seen that in many young players. He said that he was 21, and I thought he was 23 or something like that. He's been in baseball for two years. But he's doing very well. Maybe today after the game I will have a better answer for you.

Q. Avila was not mentioned. How did he join the team, and what's the value he brings to the bullpen?

OMAR LÓPEZ: I'll try to be as short as possible. Luinder Avila was supposed to be in the list of the reserves. That was what we negotiated with the organization and with the agent. Luinder Avila today is with us because of Salvador Perez. He was the facilitator.

Q. Omar, how do you deal with so many stars? The young players are leaving their organizations in the majors, they stop playing there, and you have to give them opportunities in the lineup. How do you get that balance?

OMAR LÓPEZ: Just put the names in the hat, and I pick



one. No, no, joking. That was a joke.

I just defined the nine that are going to play for reserves or on the bench. But the risk is high. The risk is high. Once again, Venezuela has a different lineup today because none of these players came from Spring Training totally prepared. For example, Escobar came to West Palm Beach with five innings. He's playing on artificial turf, and this can bring some injuries and pain, and they need some time to recover.

Now, for example, the schedule, we're playing two days in a row, and we have some players that didn't do that before. Many people do not recognize that, but it is our legacy. It is our country. But we have to secure and to guarantee their health. Tomorrow we'll be off, and we'll see what happens because we're going to play with that day off.

The problem, yesterday the offense did a good job, right? Today there is another offense, and they are going to do a good job. After that I'm going to use the names in the hat. Of course this is a joke, but that's the case, you know? We'll see what happens.

The coaches or I, we were not worried about that. They had this anxiety actually, of doing the right things, and they were not doing that. There is a sentence or a phrase, you cannot do something in your life that you are not capable to do it, because when you try to do something and you're not capable, you don't have the ability for that. You are going to force yourself and you are going to find many obstacles. So you'd better get prepared for the next step, and when you take it, now you are going to be ready in whatever you are going to do.

Q. What would you say to people that do not understand how the World Baseball Classic works, your responsibility as a manager and a coach, not only to Venezuela and the team, but with all the organizations the players come from, and how those organizations monitor these players if something goes wrong?

OMAR LÓPEZ: 24/7. I use the cell phone 24/7. It's tough for people to understand that because we could spend days and days explaining that. We would have to put together millions and millions of people to explain that.

You are the speakers. You have the platforms so people understand how the World Baseball Classic works. This is a very complicated process.

We make huge effort to bring a national team here. The players make a huge effort to come and represent their country. We have Pablo López in the WhatsApp group,

and he's coming on Monday to visit us. He sends all the messages, Jesus Mosquera, they wanted to be here. But they are very active, supporting the team, sending messages and supporting the team.

You would have to call a national press conference that we will be streaming and I will have to explain to my country how this WBC works and provide details. Just like you said, it is not easy to work with the organizations where the players play.

One of those organizations called today early in the morning to tell me, play pitcher X; if he pitches one inning, he won't be able to pitch for two days. And my answer was, I'm sorry, you are calling me too late, too late, because I didn't include that in my equation. I'm following the rules of the restrictions of the Classic. I am sorry.

I have to face the organization. Some people say, no, that I kneel down before the MLB and the organizations. But no, I fight for those that I defend. The organization told me that too late, otherwise I would say, well, try to convince your people, your organization that I'm going to use him every other day, otherwise you have to leave. Makes sense, right?

I say that, and they say, wow. So we would have to be here all day long. So I told them, I'm sorry. I never shared it with you. I want you to be with me, and this is okay for me. But they cannot tell me that at this point in time. They have to respect my work as a manager. I have to protect my players, my coaches, and I'm going to continue doing that today, tomorrow, and always.

The starting pitcher of the third game against Nicaragua, I will say that after the game today.

Q. Can you tell us a little bit about the latest hours in the clubhouse? What's the atmosphere like after the victory yesterday? Is it the same? The group is the same? Starting off on the right foot is important for the players to be more confident in this WBC.

OMAR LÓPEZ: Confidence has always been there. Sometimes we want a positive result as soon as possible to have a different vibe in the clubhouse, but we have a great vibe internally. When you have a group of coaches that care, they want things to be better. We are integrated. We talk to each other, and we can communicate these things to those coaches and other things to other coaches. And they spread in the team, those things to the whole team, so that they stay calm.

Even the coaches that haven't coached before, they are participating, they are more relaxed, and they are



participating a lot. That was another challenge for me. Miguel Cabrera, for example, started the meeting today with hitters, and I was about to say something, and he said, A, B, and C, and he kept talking. And I said to myself, don't say anything, Omar. And I went to the other meeting because he started very well, and you could see in that room that the players were paying attention. They were processing what he was saying.

Then Victor and Beto and then the analyst showing the videos, they were focused, and they started to interact, the players. That's why I feel more confident the game yesterday broke the ice.

We are Venezuela. We are okay. Nothing happened. Here we are, and we will continue playing like this.

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