

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Israel vs Venezuela

Saturday, 7 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Venezuela

Manager Omar López

Postgame Press Conference



Venezuela 11, Israel 3

Q. The importance of De Jesus' performance, he pitched four or five innings. Was that important for the offense?

OMAR LÓPEZ: That was super important especially for the first appearance when the starting pitcher gives you that advantage. The leverage of pitching for over four innings and doing that in a very effective way, that's very important, especially when the next day you're going to be off and you used many pitchers in the bullpen.

So De Jesus made a record for Venezuela with eight strikeouts. I think Freddy Garcia and Luis Garcia, they had seven strikeouts in previous performances.

Today he set a record for Venezuela.

Q. Johan Santana.

OMAR LÓPEZ: Johan Santana? That's why you're a journalist.

Q. Luis Arraez has been the third bat in the lineup. That's not his common position, but he has had a very good performance. Are you going to leave him there in the third bat?

OMAR LÓPEZ: It is not common for him to hit two home runs in the same way. It is not common, but in the previous WBC, he is now No. 1 in hitting more than one home run in a game. He did that last year, and he tied with the previous record, and now he is No. 1 for the WBC.

If you take a look at the previous Classic, Arraez was my third bat. That's your answer.

Q. You made interesting changes; are you going to do the same all the way to the end?

OMAR LÓPEZ: This is going to be my strategy. I cannot leave all the people on the bench. They have to work. They have to play. They have to be prepared for their season in the United States. I cannot give advantage to some players and not to others. This is the strategy that we are going to follow. Are you happy with these two days or there is something to improve?

Well, you should give the answer if you were in West Palm Beach, because in West Palm Beach my kids told me and what I read on the social media, they said that they wouldn't be able to win a match here.

Q. Yesterday he was a reliever and today he was the starter. What can you tell us about the performance of the Venezuelan pitching?

OMAR LÓPEZ: All the pitchers have had a very good performance so far. The whole country, we are going to be questioned all the time. When I talk to you, I talk to millions of Venezuelans. We are going to be questioned all the time because people want to be the pitchers or player that stand out in the majors.

But the team, the group should be confident in their performance, and this is my job and the job of the coaching staff. This is what we are going to do, and we are going to help them. And we are going to put them in a position according to their abilities so that they are successful and they are confident enough in this kind of tournament, full of adrenaline. And we have experience as a coach for so many years to achieve that.

When you speak about a reliever, they are all trying to do their job. We had dinner. I cannot provide details, but the pitchers set a goal after the dinner. They set their own goals. I maybe think that negative fuel they saw on social media coming from our own journalists, that motivated them. So keep going. Keep going. We are going to be motivated more and more.

Q. Maybe this is an opportunistic question. You said that you read on social media what the media says, et



cetera. What's the message for people that says that Luis Arraez is not a good hitter?

OMAR LÓPEZ: I haven't read that a lot. He has a very high percentage in terms of contact, and he's been working a lot in order to create better numbers so that other organizations want him. I would love to have him in my team if the guys go to the base. Then we have Jordan Alvarez (phonetic) and others, and they are going to drive that run in. I haven't read that much, but here he is. You could see that.

What I heard and I saw is that in Venezuela there were some journalists that didn't have Luis Arraez in the national team. They said he shouldn't be in the national team. Here he is, Luis Arraez.

Christian Walker, we wished we could have him. We have Jeremy Peña, Altuve. There is no space for everyone. But if we had, we could have him for three or four years. Of course, all these sluggers would drive him in, and we need that, people that go to the bases.

Q. Do you have the name of the pitcher for the third games?

OMAR LÓPEZ: Yoendrys Gómez is the starting pitcher against Nicaragua.

Q. Is there a reason to define that pitcher for that third game specifically?

OMAR LÓPEZ: He's a great matchup against Nicaragua, considering the hitters in Nicaragua.

Q. You said before that you would have a better idea about Chourio.

OMAR LÓPEZ: He's ready. We're going to work a little bit. He batted today. His face was different. He was smiling. He was much better. He practiced or trained a little bit. He worked on defense. He threw to the bases. Tomorrow we are going to continue working at FIU. I'm going to see him batting. Thank God, he might be in the lineup against Nicaragua.

Q. As a baseball guy, as a talent observer, the good one you are, what difference did you see between this Enmanuel De Jesus and the one you had in 2023 and the previous performances that you were able to see? What's the key difference that you have seen? What drew your attention?

OMAR LÓPEZ: Well, he is now a much more mature and confident pitcher. Two or three years past from the

previous Classic. And the edition in 2023 I didn't know him a lot. I just was listening to my coaching staff, especially Rafael Johnes that followed him as a scout in Venezuela. He's our scouting director for us, and he showed me the data.

I didn't see him much, and I said, well, he could be a good matchup for Israel. After that, when I saw that performance at that point in time, he did a great job.

But today he was excellent. Outstanding. His journey in the Asian baseball, Rafael took a look at him close; he has a very good fastball. He's now throwing sinker. He added a cutter and a slider to his repertoire. He used to throw just curveball. So I had that information, and I had confidence to bring him to the national team against Israel.

Q. You mentioned the pitcher for the third game. What key factors or aspects did you take into account for the pitchers for the fourth -- since West Palm Beach they haven't performed yet, but what would you like to see for that game against the Dominican Republic?

OMAR LÓPEZ: I would like to answer that question, but I have to face Nicaragua first, so you are three days ahead. But I'm going to answer anyway. The same job that we are doing right now is attacking the hitters, to be ahead in the count, and try to use all the pitchers. And that goes for Dominican Republic, Nicaragua the same. No matter the name, we have to respect all the teams.

There's a lot of expectation for that game, but the Dominican Republic has to face other teams before us. They have a very solid team. The same goes for Japan, the United States. But the pitchers have to find a way to attack and try to eliminate the hitters.

If you try to surprise someone, you might be surprised. We have great hitters that can get on base, and I was talking to Miguel Cabrera, and he told that to the guys. Omar, he said, to be a hitter you have to be walked because we'll have the chance to see pitches after pitches, and you can have this readjustment. We are being patient and trying to use our strengths.

Thank you.

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