

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

Sunday, 8 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

## Team Dominican Republic

### Manager Albert Pujols

#### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Of course the main goal today is the Netherlands. What does it mean to you that on the other side, Andruw Jones will be managing, a good friend of yours, two guys that are very talented from your generation?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: Of course I respect a lot Andruw Jones. We have been friends for over 20 years. He has given me so many tips. And managing against him, wow, we'll try to enjoy it. We have been speaking about that in the Dominican Republic when we were together. We celebrated him a lot back in the DR.

I'm going to prepare my team, he's going to prepare his team in order to win today.

**Q. First of all, a change in the lineup, Erik González comes into the shortstop and Perdomo leaves. Is that a routine change? How did Erik González react when you told him he was going to play as a shortstop?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, nothing. Erik González has experience, he has played in important games, and this one is very, very important. He's going to play as a shortstop, and he said, "okay, boss." That's it.

With Perdomo, he's not feeling very well, so as a precaution we tried to take care of him so that he's ready tomorrow.

**Q. You spoke about Perdomo. What is his condition? How is he feeling? Ketel, who had an injury, is he in the lineup? I would like to know about the conditions of both.**

ALBERT PUJOLS: Yes, he is okay. That's why he's in the lineup. I wouldn't put him if he were not 100 percent. This is part of my responsibility, to win, but to send back those guys to their organizations 100 percent.



I removed him the other day because of a precaution. The pinch-hitter came out and hit a homer. Perdomo on the other side is not feeling very well. He's got a cold or something. So the decision is to treat him so that he's better tomorrow. Just precaution. You know Perdomo. He's willing to play, but we have to take care of him.

**Q. Baseball is baseball, but what's the difference between managing a team in a league and managing a national team? Is it more complicated? Is it easier? Pros and cons?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: When you choose a national team such as ours, it's a privilege for me. Nelson, myself and the coaching staff have been doing a great job to prepare this team. We're very happy. That would be the key difference. We choose the players that we want if they're available to play, if they're in their winter league. You can choose the players for your roster. This is a dream for every manager, to manage a team such as the Dominican Republic.

**Q. How did Oneil Cruz react? I don't know if you spoke about that in the previous press conference. Going to the dugout, he was very excited and he was able to transmit that energy. Did he say anything before and then he had a reaction because of the homer?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: This is a show where everyone is going to react their own way. I told him, You are on the fifth at-bat instead of Marte, he wouldn't believe.

Yes, you are going to be the fifth bat.

Right now?

Yes, right now, go.

And he hit a homer. I told him, hit a large homer, and he did it. I mean, they're all available and willing to play. They're ready. They know that each game is so important in this tournament.



**Q. You were speaking about Perdomo owe. Could you repeat his condition?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: He's being treated. We are giving him some saline. The same for other players. Once again, we can use him only in the case of an emergency.

He's available, yes, but I don't want to force it. The most important thing is his health so that he's ready tomorrow.

**Q. You mentioned several players that have a cold. Can you say some names?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: No, that's your job. Find it out. (Laughter). Otherwise you're going to say they're sick, that's why they didn't perform right, et cetera.

**Q. For Severino, the number of pitches, is that controlled? And how about the game plan with the bullpen if you can say that?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: The pitchers in the bullpen are available except for Soto, who threw 24 pitches. But the others seven, nine, 16 pitches. So the whole bullpen is available for today. Severino, we'll want him to pitch for three or four innings. We're going to evaluate the game. Because you say, well, 65 pitches, but you have to evaluate all the pitchers.

Sanchez could pitch all the way to 65 pitches, but those innings were very stressful for him. That's why we removed him. We want Severino to pitch for three or four innings or call someone from the bullpen, and the pitchers will react as they did the other day.

**Q. We have been speaking about the commitment of the national team and yourself. You came today before 8:00 a.m. Can you tell us a little bit about that, the experience, the atmosphere in the clubhouse, the training that you said was optional and everyone participated? Tell us a little bit about the engagement and the commitment to the WBC.**

ALBERT PUJOLS: We have great leaders in the clubhouse. They are all committed. We try to win the WBC once again, as we did in 2013. They know how important it is for our country to represent our homeland, and that's why you are seeing these guys.

I told them, we are going to be together for two weeks; let's take advantage of that, try to support each other and to achieve our goal, which is win.

**Q. You said a key word: Distress that the pitcher was**

**facing, in that case, Cristopher Sanchez. Something similar happened with Severino in the Dominican Republic. What do you say to the pitchers so they stay calm and focused? Are you going to use Agustín Ramírez later in the game?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: You have seen the lineup. Austin is our catcher. Our idea is to try to keep them both. Ramírez will be in the lineup tomorrow. We are all humans; Severino was anxious in the Dominican Republic. He had a battle with Pedro. Maybe Pedro realized some things that he was doing differently, and he was anxious. That's why he was not able to pitch three or four innings.

But this is a totally different scenario or stage. They know how important it is to play here in the offense or defense or going to the mound and trying to make outs. Just like I said, Severino is supposed to pitch for three or four innings, and then we'll call the bullpen for them to continue doing a good job.

**Q. We won the first game in a very exciting way. We are facing the Netherlands. They have been a difficult rival for us. Any special strategy for this game against the Netherlands after seeing two games of the Netherlands? What will you highlight?**

ALBERT PUJOLS: They have a tremendous team with a great manager such as Andruw Jones, someone who respects baseball. And he has prepared all those players for this tournament. I just hope that the players play aggressively as they have been doing. And I want to use with the matchup, whatever we need, pinch-hitter, we are going to use the bench and try to win this game, which is super important for them but also for us.

We are playing one game at a time and to reinforce the defense.

**Q. There's something we have seen on social media. I know that you are a very spiritual guy who leads that. We have seen you praying on the field, et cetera.**

ALBERT PUJOLS: All of them. We read the Bible. We have the Bible on our flag, and prayers are very powerful in a group. That's our culture, you know. Our culture, putting everything in God's hands no matter what and saying glory to God. Carlos Santana is our leader as well as Perdomo and other players.

But that's very important on a daily basis to try and put everything in God's hands so that He guides us. He is the only one that can see the past, present and future. Glory to God every day.

