

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Nicaragua vs Israel

Sunday, 8 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Nicaragua

Manager Dusty Baker

Pregame Press Conference



Q. What did you have for dinner last night?

DUSTY BAKER: I had lobster and pasta at Kiki. I went to Kiki on the River.

Q. How was it comparatively?

DUSTY BAKER: We had a good time. I needed to see my friends and wife after that game last night. That helped a lot.

Q. Today how do you approach this? You talked about wanting to win. You've had two chances, got close. What does today's game mean in terms of the goals coming into this tournament?

DUSTY BAKER: You know, today's game is big. You've got your back up against a wall. We still have a slight chance of getting to the quarterfinals if everything works out, but we've got to win first. If you win, then you've got a chance, and if you don't win, you don't have a chance. You just don't want to be playing for fun on Monday. You want to be playing to mean something.

Last night was big, but I remember my dad telling me that there's a saying in the Bible that you may weep at night, but in the morning you wake up, you can smile -- I'm paraphrasing. So amen. I was weeping last night, but I'm smiling today.

Q. Looking ahead to the next games, what do you think the team needs to improve in order to put themselves in a better position to get a win? Also, I wanted to ask if you're surprised that major leaguer Mark Vientos still hasn't connected for a hit after eight at-bats with three strikeouts in the tournament. What are your expectations on that?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, the thing that we need to do is just get some hits with runners in scoring position. I think we

had base runners on every inning. All you can do is put yourself into position, but you've got to have some guys that come through.

As far as Mark Vientos, what people don't understand, he's only played -- like you can practice all you want, but for the guys that got here out of big league camp, they've only played probably six or seven games the whole spring up until now. This is still Spring Training.

Spring Training is such where usually the fastball hitters hit because the pitchers can't get the breaking balls over, and the guys who played winter ball hit because they just got through playing winter ball. But for those that didn't play winter ball, you're not ready to hit breaking balls really unless they're a mistake. And that's what they're throwing Mark Vientos. They're pitching him as if it's June or July.

I know that was a long answer.

Q. I would like to know an explanation why in the lineup that is going to open against Israel we don't see Cristhian Sandoval, a hitter who is the second best in average with .500, and out of the six at-bats, he had three singles and he has been on base five times.

DUSTY BAKER: I knew people were going to ask me that. But my job as a manager is to try to put the best lineup that's out there against who we're playing. And with the repertoire of pitches which I've seen Kremer with the Orioles, I've seen him pitch in person, and I think that Montes matches up better with him, just like in the first game, I thought Alegria matched up better instead of Downs, and then I played Downs yesterday.

I'm not just pulling names out of a hat. It's through studying. It's through knowing and through hoping.

But all of them are ready to come back in the game. I've got it all planned. Hopefully I'll get Sandoval back in, I'll get Trujillo back in, and hopefully by the time they come back in, the other guys have done something to help us win.

Q. You've talked so much about what you've been able



to give to the guys. In this whole experience what have you been able to learn from the guys that you've picked up, obviously in your experience in the game?

DUSTY BAKER: I've learned a lot from these guys. They're very sincere. They're humble guys. They're free-hearted guys. The whole country to me is free-hearted.

Even people that don't have much are willing to give you everything. With that in mind, you're more willing to give to them.

These guys, they're in a stress-free kind of society that don't have as much as we have, but we have everything here in America, and everybody is stressing out. It's like, it was good for me to spend some time in a stress-free situation.

Q. We are very proud to have you as a manager in Nicaragua. The day after the loss, yesterday, it was painful. The whole country, it's been difficult to process that. But today is there anything that you thought, I would have done this or that, or are you happy with the performance yesterday or with your decisions?

DUSTY BAKER: I was very happy with everything, and if I had to do that decision, I'd do it again. Just because it didn't work, that doesn't mean that wasn't the right decision. Sometimes the guy on the other side has something to do with the outcome. If things work out, then it's no problem. If they don't work out, then why didn't you do this?

That reminds me I was reading something the other day about a college coach that went to the barber shop on Monday to get a haircut, and the barber -- they had just lost a football game on Saturday, and he went to the barber shop on Monday, and the barber waited until he was halfway through cutting his hair, and he said, Coach, I don't think I would have started that quarterback on Saturday. The coach answered that if he had until Monday to make his decision, he wouldn't have started him either.

Does that make sense?

Q. For today's games, I'm wondering what is the message that you give to all the guys before going to the field?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, the message, I haven't really come up with it yet, but I know the message will have something to say where I was on the Dodgers and we were down three games in the standings with three games to go, and

we won all three games. They had champagne on ice, and we ended up going to the playoffs.

Then on the Dodgers again, we were down 2-1 in the first series. We were down 2-0 in the second series and down 2-0 or 3-1 in the third series, and we came back and won.

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