

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Dominican Republic vs Israel

Monday, 9 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Dominican Republic

Albert Pujols

Postgame Press Conference

Dominican Republic 10, Israel 1

Q. Tell me all about it, third victory. We looked invincible on the field until now. Thank God our pitchers have done a great job. What can you say?

ALBERT PUJOLS: You just said it. Just like you said, so far we have been playing very well, offense, defense, pitching, and this is the way to win this kind of short tournament. But we haven't achieved our goal, which is to win this Classic. This is just another step into the second round. But we haven't achieved our ultimate goal, which is to win this championship.

Tomorrow we are going to be off, but we are going to try and focus on the next game.

Q. After Sanchez' exit, the bullpen has been just perfect. Tell me about it because you said that the pitchers are not defined, but the community to do the job with the guys was done. Can you speak about the projection you had in terms of the Venezuela game, the bullpen, the pitchers, position that you need?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, we are going to speak about next game on Wednesday. Today we are going to enjoy the victory today. I think that our bullpen structure has worked because we worked on it from day one. Together with Wellington, Cano, Joel and myself, and just like you said, bullpen is super important, especially when you have a number of arms that you cannot use back to back. You have to count the pitches that they are going to use.

Bottom line, they have done a great job so far. The plan, the communication with them has worked. There is no ego here. Dominguez can pitch as a closer or Uribe. You saw him in the seventh inning. We just have to find a way to find the best matchup to make the three outs and to win the game.



Q. I have thought when there is power, there is no discipline around the plate, but the DR has proven the opposite. You received 11 walks, and the same in the previous game. So you have received 29 walks, nine home runs, and you are one of the best in terms of strikeouts, only 13. So you have the power, you have a good offense, but also the discipline around the plate is present.

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, thank you for that. We had to credit Rojas, Mejia, the coaches. We have to give credit to the players, the plan, the discipline they bring to the plate when you have that kind of lineup, from the first to the ninth bat, they can hurt their rival, and this is what you are going to say day after day.

Yesterday Soto, today, Oneil Cruz, and that's why I am so happy with the team, especially in the DR when we play those exhibition games, the discipline they showed around home plate.

Yeah, I was surprised. I was impressed. But the credit is all for the players. They were so focused on the season and they were preparing for this championship.

Q. You included Ramírez behind the plate and he was perfect. He later guided Bello perfect, only one run, seven strikeouts, so we could see this catcher doing a great job. What's your projection for him looking forward?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Looking forward, what do you mean?

Q. For the next days.

ALBERT PUJOLS: The plan is that he plays against Venezuela. That's the plan with Ramírez. He knew today was the day. Wells could be hitting four homers, but he knew that today was his day. Communication is very important with all these players. Santana knew that he was about to play. The same for Cruz.

When you as a leader, as a manager, have that approach with the guys, you can take the maximum out of them, and



I'm not afraid of changing the lineups and giving opportunities to the other players because I want them to be fresh if I need them, so the last three games have given me that flexibility, and I have been able to use the bench players.

But he will be there on Wednesday, and after that, we'll think about a new game plan.

Q. I'm going to tell you something that was viral and very important for the DR, and that is the kid with the five heart surgeries. Someone told me that when you found out about that said to bring the kid to the dugout. It was a dream for the kid. Number one, how did you find out, through which media, and the joy, the happiness of that kid to make his dream with so many superstars, especially you that is going to be a Hall of Famer?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, we are an example. I received that message from a good friend. I'm not going to say the name because I have to respect his privacy. He is part of the media.

I said, well, I am going to do everything I can, and I coordinated with Miguel Medina, and he said 9:30, everything is prepared, and we did that. I mean, what that child has been through, so young, that I gave him that second opportunity and taking a picture with him, that was great because he felt perfect for three or four minutes when he was in the clubhouse. That goes beyond baseball.

God gives us talent, life, and at the same time, responsibility as players, as athletes, to be an example to others.

To me, it was an honor and a privilege to be part of the group that welcomed the kid. Thank God we were able to do that and to put a smile on his face.

Q. How dynamic is it to have a player like Tatís hitting at the top of your lineup?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Amazing, dangerous. I think our goal when when I was instructing the lineup over the last three weeks or month, it was looking at an idea how I can put speed on the top of the lineup, for the middle of the lineup.

I love how I wrote down how my staff and myself communicate how well with that lineup would work, especially with Perdomo down in the bottom hitting ninth and then Junior right there leading off for us. And then with Ketel hitting second. If you've got those guys, one, two and three getting on base, there's a pretty good chance

that we're going to score.

Today it was Tatís Jr's day. He took the show, and that's how dangerous this lineup is. I mean, one day it's going to be Tatís, the other day Guerrero, Soto, Oneil. And I think putting him in that spot, it was the best chance for us because as a guy who can turn a base hit into a double, a double into a triple or he can put the ball in the seats like he did today, and that was a huge moment for us to turn things around when he dug deep and hit that grand slam.

Q. At the end of the game when you clinched your spot to move on, pretty subdued, some handshakes, nobody was going crazy. Do they have an understanding of the bigger goal?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Trust my, they understand. I think our whole team understands our goal is to win this tournament. Everybody, our country is waiting for us to win this tournament. It's not going to be easy. This is just giving us a pass to the next round. But still, we're going to be ready, and we're going to stay focused, and that's how we've been doing it for the last week or so that we've been together.

Our mission is not over until it's over. We're going to be focusing day by day, winning innings, playing defense, taking advantage of the mistakes the other teams are making, and at the same time, taking what they're giving us.

Today, 11 walks, that shows you right there that our team is really patient and they know, hey, if it's not my time, you want to walk me, then the next guy can do the damage, and that's what we've been doing.

Q. Two questions. One, how important is it for you to count on that diversity of players in this kind of tournament? You have had a chance to see some players standing out. All of them actually. Your evaluation on the performance of Brayan Bello?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Brayan Bello was excellent. He did a great job as we expected. He was able to pitch another inning because he had over 40 pitches in the fourth inning. And we wanted four innings from him, but he was feeling okay. He said, well, I can pitch five innings, and he did. He did a great job. Israel was off balance with the fastball.

Even with the homer, he was feeling bad in the dugout. He said, well, I had to be more aggressive. I had to pitch a fastball, and he hit a homer.

But I told him, this is a learning process for you. Looking forward, you are going to be very successful in the majors.

This is a lesson that you have learned.

Regarding the players, well, our structure, Nelson, myself and the coaching staff, we wanted to cover all the places that we wanted to use during the tournament. It has been working very well, and we want to give opportunity to all the players to participate in the championship.

Q. For the third day in a row, is that the offense you expected, and the possibility to change players so that they advance and progress in that offense?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Yeah, that's the offense that everyone expected. Not only me, but the credit should be given to each of those players. We are not here to play games. They are all working, giving time. Tomorrow they will be off, and everyone is going to come to the training, and we are focused. The mission that we started one year ago to prepare this team, and we have been together for 10 days, our mission is to win this tournament. This is what you are seeing.

I hope to continue winning like this. This is just a step to the second round. Our goal is to win the championship.

You are all speaking out loud about the game against the Venezuela team, as well as the fans, and that's okay, but we want to go beyond that game against Venezuela. We want to win the tournament. I think that you are thinking the same.

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