

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Venezuela vs Nicaragua

Monday, 9 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Nicaragua

Manager Dusty Baker

Pregame Press Conference

Q. What do you think was missing for the Team Nicaragua to be able to secure wins in the games against Dominican Republic, Israel, and Netherlands?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, a few things. We just couldn't get the timely hits. That's what this game's all about is driving in runs. We had bases loaded a number of times. Just seems like it builds and builds and builds and then one time leads to another time. So we just need a couple times of success with the bases loaded. And also you have to minimize your walks and make them earn it.

Q. Dusty, this is a two-part question. You had a lot of turnover from the series with Cuba on your roster. What did you do to get this team ready for this tournament in such a short time. And the second part is you played a lot of good teams tough. How much has Nicaraguan baseball come along since the last World Baseball Classic?

DUSTY BAKER: I'll go to number 2 first. I'm not really sure because I wasn't here. So like I would watch it on TV sometimes. I was watching mostly at that time the Dominican Republic, the USA, Venezuelan. You know, the better teams at that time, Japan. So I was training in Florida I think the last one in the last WBC I was with Houston. So I'm hoping that we've come a long ways and hoping that my staff and myself has brought some quality and possibly some improvement not only for now but in the future as well.

And what was the first part of the question?

Q. You've had a lot of turnover since the series with Cuba. What did you do to get ready for this tournament?

DUSTY BAKER: It's tough, it's tough getting ready for the tournament because the turnover that we had was basically three infielders and a couple pitchers. And the



infielders hadn't been in spring training that long and they've only played probably a handful of games. One of the main things that happened is at this time in Spring Training as a manager, nobody would have played longer than five I think. But they're asked to play nine, I think, so right away and you're risking injury.

People say how could you be tired. Well, you go from no innings to nine I think, and we're the only team that didn't have a day off. A couple teams had a couple days off or had three or four days off seems like.

That kind of hurt us, too. I think that hurt our pitching.

Q. Eighth winningest manager in Major League Baseball history but they say this game keeps teaching you new things. What have you learned through this tournament?

DUSTY BAKER: I learned that there's some international players that can play this game, like big-time international players. I've learned that the game is global now. I always knew it was global, but I didn't have any idea to this effect. I really hadn't seen the love and the joy of the game of baseball from a fan's perspective. Because when I'm leaving in between games and the game's over and there's still 10,000 Dominicans out there partying or 5,000 Nicaraguenses, I'm like dang, man, this is fun. You know, sometimes we take the game a little too serious but down here sometime they take it a little too much partying.

Q. Dusty, in the short time that you have been in Nicaragua and after the experience that you have had in this WBC, what would you recommend to the leaders of the Nicaraguan federation to start developing in a systematic way the kids, the teenagers, the youngsters in Nicaragua so that Nicaragua in a few years had a better structure, baseball structure generally speaking?

DUSTY BAKER: It takes time, it takes time to develop kids. It takes time for the scouts to come down to see the kids, and that motivates the kids that they have a chance.



In Venezuelan and in Dominican Republic, they have academies. Major League Baseball has put academies in these places where they make the kids eat better, stronger, better instruction and it shows. But it's taken a while. It's probably taken 10 to 12 years for them to get to this point.

So if you think you're going to do it overnight, it's tough. But it starts with the youth, starts with the kids and then it starts with -- it ends with the instructors. Because you have some excellent instructors here, and excellent coaches here. I think it would behoove the country and the system to invest not only in the kids but in the coaches as well.

Q. What's it been like to see Albert Pujols manage in this tournament and do you think he can manage in the big leagues some day?

DUSTY BAKER: It shouldn't be some day, he should be managing it right now. There are a lot of guys that are managing that don't have the experience on the field of Albert Pujols. You know, I didn't have much experience either. Like I coached for a while and then I had experience in the fall league. But there are a lot of guys in the game that doesn't have the experience that Albert Pujols has, that don't have the knowledge that Albert Pujols have or don't have the respect from the players.

Because that's huge in this equation is how your players respect you. It helps when they look on the back of your bubblegum card and it says he's one of the baddest dudes that ever played this game. Albert Pujols should be managing somewhere right now.

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