

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

Wednesday, 11 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

## Team Venezuela

## Manager Omar Lopez

### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Is this more about country pride tonight against the Dominican Republic? And what do you expect to see from Sandy Alcantara on the mound tonight?**

OMAR LOPEZ: I think it's going to be more first place, not about culture pride. It's first place in order to be the number 1 in our bracket.

And what do I expect from Sandy Alcantara? Throw everything in the middle of the plate so we can hit and we can put the ball in play and he can get on base and we can score many runs. I hope his slider doesn't work well tonight. But it's going to be a great game. It's going to be a great game. There's a lot of people respecting this game. We all respecting this game, too.

And I think this is going to be the great test for, in our opinion, the World Baseball Classic starting tonight.

**Q. Good afternoon. You said you are playing for the first place, but both teams are playing for the qualification today. How to work on a game? There is nothing at stake because you are already at the second round, and now it is really a drama that is not related to you, it's the analysis of the qualifying system. The United States had a problem yesterday. How did you study that in order to avoid that? I mean, to get to know the system, try to be as honest as possible?**

OMAR LOPEZ: We are already qualified, but both teams are going to play aggressively. It is a baseball game, you know? And in the moment, the adrenaline for the World Baseball Classic starts now. How? Against the Dominican Republic.

Whether we win or lose, we are going to go out and play to win to have -- to show the energy that we are going to show also in the next round. And I prepare myself as a



final, you know? And I try to do my best to try to make my best decisions asking for God's help to help me.

Regarding the starting of the system, whatever, to be honest, I fell asleep last night. No. I was not feeling well. I went to the game. I witnessed the record of -- the bio from the Miami Heat. I was not feeling well. My son wakes up in the morning, and he says, "What about the surprise?"

"I don't know. What's going on?" I took a look at the social networks, and I saw what happened to the U.S. team.

This tournament is organized by the Federation, so every team and every country should have a working team with the right knowledge, the absolute knowledge of everything that could happen, including all these scenarios. And depending on the schedule, what could happen. I was speaking about the Nicaragua game.

I told them at the previous Classic, we started with Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Look, what a way to start the Classic, and now we have to go to the next round with those results. We are entering the next round before the third game because the Dominican Republic beat Israel. I already knew that. We already knew that scenario.

But the goal is to win not because we were qualified, but because we want to win. It is important to know the system. All the teams should be aware of what could happen, the press.

**Q. Can you speak a little bit more about the importance of being the winner of this pool, and why did you choose Eduardo Rodriguez for tonight? Puerto Rico and other teams are being punished. For example, Puerto Rico yesterday in the middle of the game received a notification or a call saying that they could not use Barrios.**

OMAR LOPEZ: First of all, thank you for your congratulations using Puerto Rico. Looking back, we have no control of that. You have to be prepared, and you have to be ready. You have to anticipate what could happen.



My experience in 2023 during the Classic and what I could see in 2025 during the potential of players we could have in our roster, I knew that such a problem could happen. And not only that, but also the injuries in the arms in 2023.

So you have to be prepared for many case scenarios and for different problems that you might face. This could be reviewed. Well, maybe yes, but we are not the owners of that. We don't have the power to do that.

And speaking about knowing the Classic and the rules, I think that this was a part of your question; right? Oh. The importance of being the winner of the pool. Because there is a qualifier for the Olympic games, and this is going to be considered. You cannot lose games. This is a very important point. You should be aware of that. If you come here and lose this game and then you go to the semifinals, you lose, these are going to be two losses, but it's only one loss. You could have an advantage with the second country from the Americas that could qualify for the Olympics.

**Q. I'm feeling that all the conference are taking this Classic more seriously. For example, the surprise by Italy yesterday. How do you see the development of the games in the different cities for the Classic to play? Were they the favorite countries, or they fought for being here?**

OMAR LOPEZ: To be honest, I haven't been paying attention whether the other countries were taking this seriously or not. My main concern was Miami and this pool.

I was taking a look at the Cuba-Canada game, and I could only see two or three innings. But when you see the final result of the game, when you go to the hotel, the walk-off of Puerto Rico, Hernaiz hit a homer and I thought it may not play the final of Santurce because I was there and I could see the chanting and the screams and the stadium, and I know the Boricua culture and the Dominican culture.

So to me, all the teams, if that's your perception because you have more time for that -- all the teams should take this championship very seriously and see a way to keep that way. Because take a look at this, take a look at that. Many jobs being created, for example. People want to see the best players possible wearing the national jerseys.

So yes, together we can take a look at that variable. If we speak about reviewing the rules, et cetera, we have to do that together to be firm as Spanish-speaking countries, because the others maybe are going to follow the rules.

It's very simple. I mean, the passion in Latin America in

baseball is unique. There is no more passion for baseball in Latin America.

**Q. Yesterday or the day before, you were saying that this game, because of the circumstances of both teams, is not that important even when you have to win to get the winner of this pool. Many people say that the winner maybe won't face Japan, which is a very powerful team. How about for you, Omar Lopez? How important is it to avoid playing the champions in this tournament?**

OMAR LOPEZ: This is out of context, you know? When you see things in the social networks that were speaking about a game and I wanted to be focused only in the next two games and not in Japan's -- possible Japan's game, and I told you, let's wait for the moment. Let's start for -- with these games, and then we can speak about Japan.

Yes. Like I said, it is very important to be a winner because you can -- you should avoid losses to qualify for the Olympics. How to get ready? Well, we have been preparing the best possible way. We are ready to face this opponent. It makes no difference. It makes no difference. If you want to be a champion, you have to beat the best teams. You have to beat the best teams. And we are going to face the Dominican -- the best teams now, Korea, Japan, the United States.

I don't know if they are going to be one of the best teams here, but whatever, we are going to face are going to be the best teams in the quarterfinals, semifinals. I mean, they will be the best teams. Forget about the pay. The Dominican Republic, Venezuela, we are very good teams.

So like I said before, the Classic starts today. If we cannot make it, there will be another Classic.

**Q. The Dominican Republic team, they have had so many walks. Eduardo Rodriguez is going to pitch today. How about your pitching team, your bullpen? How are they feeling knowing that they are going to face the most dangerous offense of this Classic?**

OMAR LOPEZ: Do you have the numbers that they are the best of the tournament or they are the most dangerous offense?

**Q. Yes, we have the numbers, and they have three wins, and we have three wins; right?**

OMAR LOPEZ: Okay. Simple answer. Until now, the pitching staff has done a great -- an excellent job so far. And in baseball you have the opportunities to go out and to be brilliant, to do a good job so you are ready to pitch.



The fact that you can pitch with or without control is no guarantee that you are going to be or not successful. So we are focused on our job, which is to work, to be ready, to try to make as many outs as possible. And this is what we expect for tonight from Eduardo and all the other pitchers that will perform today.

**Q. Omar, you were describing the work of your coaches and how important it is to be confident. No matter how talented they are, they should believe in themselves, you said.**

Now, concerning this game and the characteristics of their rival, how important is it for the confidence of the players in the game tonight?

OMAR LOPEZ: No matter what happened, the confidence will be present in themselves and in ourselves because there is no reason to lose confidence. No way. There is no reason. It is a game or -- you have to deliver more. The fans will be the tenth player in this situation. You will have more adrenaline. But they are going to be confident on both sides, myself and them.

We are already here. They believe in themselves and they are so confident. And they are so relaxed. They are focused both in the hotel, in the clubhouse, when we have meetings to speak up at the next opponent.

It is unique, you know, and this is a very important challenge for a manager. And thank God we made it and here we are.

And this is regarding the coaches. They are focused, and the players are focused, and they are prepared because we send all the information some days before and they start speaking among themselves, and that's why they are so confident in our team.

**Q. Omar, many questions have been done about the game, the pitchers, but this time speak about the feeling. What does it mean to you to be the manager in this game against the Dominican Republic and when there are so many Venezuelans in Miami and Venezuela paying attention because of the rivalry between those teams. Can you tell us about the responsibility you have when you go out to the field? Thank you.**

OMAR LOPEZ: Once I was appointed for the second time to be the Venezuelan team's manager, I remembered so many things about our country, when we were shy, how we were born and raised, and you start building responsibility.

But there was no need, you know, to do that because we were looking forward to this World Classic. We were anxious for that. And when you are putting together a preliminary roster with 80, 90 players and we receive some refusals for X reasons, there were players crying, trying to appeal through the players association. Not every -- not everybody knows that, but we do.

This is an extra motivation to fight for them. You have seen Pablo Lopez a few days ago here at this stadium. He visited us. He was one of the players that was about to be approved. He was approved; and two days after, he got an injury. That was very strong for him.

But this is an extra motivation. We are inspired to continue fighting for them and for our country. So whoever comes to this kind of tournament and says that he or she doesn't love our country, well, they are wrong. This is just a platform to grow in his professional career.

And I don't need these to grow. I don't need this as the platform. I'm doing this just to give joy to my country and, if possible, so that they enjoy this week at least.

**Q. Omar, good afternoon. You were speaking about the Olympics. Many people do not take this into consideration. You are being the manager for the second time in this Classic. How important is it to promote Venezuela for the Olympics in L.A.?**

OMAR LOPEZ: I am going to answer with a question. When was the last time Venezuela was in the Olympics? Never. We want to listen to the national anthem wearing the national jersey in L.A., and this is incredible. This is high pride, and we have this opportunity.

In the Classic you can be the winner. You can be the champion, and we are going to qualify in 2028. We are going to remember that in 2026 we are ready to wear in the Olympics. And again those that will be available wearing the jersey are going to represent their country.

If they don't think that this is important, well, in that case they should have a different mindset because the World Classic is one event, one world event with many, many players.

But the Olympics is the highest, the highest that could be in sports worldwide. Thank you.

(FastScripts by ASAP Sports)