

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Dominican Republic vs Venezuela

Wednesday, 11 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Dominican Republic Manager Albert Pujols

Postgame Press Conference



Dominican Republic 7, Venezuela 5

Q. Congrats, Albert. Tell me about that game, four homers. The team continues practicing a very aggressive offense. What do you feel? Something different could have been done? Or are you Albert happy with the game today?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Different? I cannot complain; right? Once again, the offense was great. Sandy Alcantara pitched for three innings. Maybe not with the result that he wanted, but he executed our plan for the bullpen.

And yeah, it was interesting in the ninth inning, but eventually we won. That's the most important thing.

Q. We know the offense of the Dominican Republic, you had so many homers. Was that a surprise for you? Were you expecting that offense?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Like I said before, our offense from the first to the ninth that can do harm. And the beauty is that they are not trying to do a lot. And Tatis Junior created that today. That was easier for us to use the bullpen when we moved Sandy.

But when you have the lineups such as the one we have, this is going to be a problem for the rival. This is what happened today. This is what they have been doing throughout the tournament.

Q. Albert, you have been saying that this was just another game, that the game didn't have a very -- it was not very important because both teams were qualified. But in my opinion, it was not just another game. I saw two teams trying to win, maybe because their rivalry or because they wanted to be the winner of the pool in order to avoid Japan in the quarterfinals. I didn't see this as a normal game.

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, the fans are used to all the game that you are expecting from the very beginning. You have seen two great countries, two great teams with a -- great teams.

We won. The Dominican Republic won. But you have to respect Venezuela because they have so many talented players in that team. Considering the history of all the Venezuelan players, we have to respect that.

Like I said yesterday, that rivalry thing, you know -- that is created by the fans and maybe you -- we do not think about that. The players don't think about that. No matter the team we are going to face, we will try to win and to checkup. And this is what we did for today. And I'm happy that was a great game for the fans. They were expecting this. Beautiful game.

Q. Sandy's start, what do you think worked, what do you think didn't, and do you expect him to pitch in the WBC?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, that's my goal, to have him pitch again. I liked the way he was throwing the ball. The velocity was there. He just got behind the count and got in a little trouble.

But besides that, he was executing his pitches. And at the end of the day, he was really comfortable. Soto in the first inning ended up hitting a two-run home run. That helped him out a little bit to get a little bit of release.

But I'm really happy with how he threw the ball today, and hopefully we get to see him again because that means if he's pitching again, that means that we're in the finals.

So I'm really excited about it and looking forward for him to make the adjustment that he needs to make and see where we're at.

Q. Albert, what happened in that play that was a strikeout and Tatis Junior stayed in the second base? What happened there? And number two, now you are



going to face Korea. You haven't announced the pitcher for Korea; right?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Christopher Sanchez is going to be the pitcher.

In that play, the umpire told me that he was not seeing me when I raised my hand. After that, I went out, and I told him, "I don't have -- you don't have to look at me. I just have to raise my hand in order to challenge the play."

But he told me that he didn't see me when I raised my hand. And after a while, since he didn't see me, the play was canceled, voided.

Q. Only one day to study Korean roster that you are going to face on Friday. You just announced Christopher Sanchez. What is the preparation of your team with players that you don't know, the Korean players that you don't know. Even when you have some report from the scout, how are you going to prepare the team for that game?

ALBERT PUJOLS: It is important to trust the players and the scouts. So far, they have done a great, fantastic job.

We don't know them a lot, but I don't think they know us. So we are going to do our job, the same job that we have been doing with the hitters and the pitchers. We'll try to obtain the positive results on Friday.

Q. The Dominican relievers have allowed only one run. When Uribe is in trouble and he gave three walks in a row, what did you think? How was your reaction?

ALBERT PUJOLS: Well, I think that I reacted well because I made the change. My idea was to keep Uribe. I didn't want him to throw so many pitches to use him on Friday. He's a human being. That happens, you know?

It is not the case with Uribe, but it happened today. The most important thing is that the bullpen is doing a great job throughout the tournament. And Alvarado came and did his job. The groundout by Sandoval, I wanted -- or Contreras, I wanted him to make a double play, but they did a great job.

We always try to improve. We want them to practice that play tomorrow. But I am very happy with the job of the bullpen and the whole team. You have seen that from outside, the vibes on the team.

But if you were in the clubhouse, oh, my God, you will feel that, the real thing, you know? This team, the Dominican Republic team this year, what we have today, I have to

thank God for this opportunity. This has been one of my best experiences in my professional career. I have had so many successes in my career, but this is one of the best teams.

Q. Albert, as someone who just hated striking out, how satisfying is it to see Juan Soto hit with two strikes and see his approach and how he can hit home runs like that in those moments?

ALBERT PUJOLS: It's awesome. For me, I think a strikeout is part of the game, but as a hitter, I always thought that when you're striking out, you're kind of hurting your team twice because if you're putting the ball in play, you're putting the pressure on the defense and anything can happen with two outs.

So Soto is probably one of the best players in the game right now, and the approach that he has in the play, the eyes, I think the only guy that I can say is Carlos Santana. We have another guy on our team that's really good, the selection on the play. I mean, those two guys, I play against them both, more against Carlos Santana. And the way that he takes our bats and works the counts is the same way that Juan does. And, you know, it just -- that's why he is who he is, you know? One of the best players in the game.

Q. Albert, from now on are you going to use the same closure for the rest of the tournament?

ALBERT PUJOLS: No, I don't have the same closer. This is a very short tournament. When you take a look at our bullpen, after the seventh inning, any of them could be a closer. So the most important thing is to see a way to use them all in different ways.

When we put together this team the way we did and you go out to play, you don't think, well, I'm going to use X as a closer. The most important thing is to know who can make three outs in that inning, according to the data.

I mean, this is a very short tournament. Now, if you told me, well, this is a championship of 160 games, that's different. But in this tournament, so short as the Classic, you will have to find a way to choose a pitcher that is going to make three outs. We have been doing that and it is working.

Q. Omar Lopez said before that this was the real start of the World Classic, this was the most anticipated game of the whole Classic. Do you agree with him? So this game was the start of the Classic because it is the strongest team that the Dominican Republic has faced. And in terms of the score, you have been even

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ALBERT PUJOLS: I don't see it like that. To me, the Classic started last week. Every game we played has been important. Maybe this was the most anticipated game by defense, and they have enjoyed a lot.

However, the tournament to us, it started last Friday and every game we have played is super important. The way we have behaved and performed, that's why we are here today and we are going to the second round. We are going to continue doing the job that we have been doing with the bullpen, with the offense, defense, and preparing the players so that they are ready for the next game.

(FastScripts by ASAP Sports).