

World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals

Thursday, 12 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Venezuela

Manager Omar Lopez

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. Omar, yesterday you said that Yoendrys is going to be removed from the roster. Do you have a substitute for him?

OMAR LOPEZ: No. He won't be substituted. To give you some details, out of the four pitchers that we have in the pool, only one can be removed, Yoendrys. The other three will continue with us. It's only one game.

And if later on we go to the semifinals and finals, we'll bring another pitcher. We have up to two possibilities. Eiberson Castellano for sure will be the starting pitcher.

Q. Yesterday you said that the most difficult thing for Venezuela is to tell a good player to go to the bench. Do you have that impression? Is that very complicated, considering your experience in WBCs?

OMAR LOPEZ: The way I communicate with the players is to provide the information in a transparent way. Depending on the game we are going to play, they know what to do. Otherwise, it is difficult if they do not accept the role that they are going to have.

So to me, it hasn't been complicated to communicate with them.

Q. Omar, you were able to talk to the players. What's the morale?

OMAR LOPEZ: I talked to the team. Only losers conduct meetings all the time. I try to reinforce the strengths of my team. I try to work psychologically. They had a meeting by themselves, closed doors, and we started our preparation to face Japan.

I talked to several players today about some things that we have to adjust, but it is important to highlight that yesterday the game was very intense, and I think that we played good baseball except for a couple of things that happened,



and that's part of the game. And we were competing throughout the game, so the morale or the emotions shouldn't affect us through the game against Japan.

There is something to be highlighted, and it's that yesterday it was a game full of pride and emotions. When you have that kind of game, the anxiety is higher. It is more like a spiritual war, fight that you have to have with yourselves and as a team. If you are not able to control that, you can become your own enemy.

And yesterday in the game, we made some mistakes, and there were many emotions, but we did our best to win the game.

Q. You have said many times that your goal is to be champion. Now you have to beat Japan, right, your next rival? What are you expecting from Japan, the key factors?

OMAR LOPEZ: It is a solid team. They are very disciplined in the home plate, but they also have their weaknesses. Their key characteristics is how they prepare and how disciplined they are in the execution plan.

Our baseball is similar, but we have more anxiety and passion to do things, you know, and this is our part of the game. And I keep saying that. If you want to win, if you want to be the champ, you have to prove that you are the best. The only way to do that is to control whatever you can do, whatever is in your hands.

Q. Something you can adjust in order to improve the batting? I know that it is easier to say than done. After the fifth hitter or so, you are not batting very well.

OMAR LOPEZ: The adjustments are being made by the coaches, and they are working on the strengths that they have right now. Many of them.

I said today that we are going to play five games in ten days. It's a very short and intense tournament, and that's why they have to be better in a short amount of time, but in a competing spirit and controlling the emotions. They have to do that so that they can be better. It is not easy. People want us to play exceptionally well. But no, things are going



to be better, I'm sure. I'm confident. And we have strength.

If we have a good defense, if we have good pitching, we are going to win just the way we did in three out of four games. We made a couple of mistakes in the last game, but that's it.

Q. Tell us about the execution plan, the game plan, the pitching.

THE INTERPRETER: I'm sorry. The audio was awful. We couldn't get the question.

OMAR LOPEZ: We hope that Suarez is going to be the great pitcher that he has been all the time. He has cold blood, he prepares himself, and he can pitch in front of 30,000 or 40,000 people at the stadium.

He is going to have a good execution, cold-blooded, and he's going to count on the win in the first part of the game.

Maybe he will be able to pitch for four, five, six innings. He's one of the best pitchers in the WBC. And if we have a good pitching, then we are going to win the game.

Q. You are describing the game against the Dominican Republic as a very emotional one with passion. How would you describe the game against Japan, three times world champions? We're speaking about the rivalry between the U.S. and Japan.

OMAR LOPEZ: Life or death, I would say is the answer, life or death. Just ten minutes before this PC, some people know I told Pujols, "Good luck, and I hope to see you again in the final, or semifinal." So the goal for both teams are to be in the final. We want to beat Japan and the U.S., Italy. You name it.

Like I said before the game yesterday, I already knew that the Classic would start yesterday because the emotions, the feelings, the passion is totally different, different from the previous Classic. Last time we knew that we would be facing the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

But today we have very, very good pitchers. There is a U.S. pitcher -- an American pitcher, and he stated -- and I think this is -- publicly that he thought that the Classic was like an All-Star Game.

He has no idea whatsoever what a Classic is. We're speaking about a high-level player in the Majors. So if you haven't lived the Classic, you have no idea what to face.

Young players that are having this experience for the first

time, they are going to be mature. We lost the game yesterday, but we won a lot, and we are now motivated to face Japan on Saturday.

Q. In the case of Ranger, who is going to have the first performance, and now they can throw more pitches, and the last time he pitched 43 pitches approximately, do you think that he will be able to throw more pitches?

OMAR LOPEZ: That was the first time he pitched in this Classic. In this part, he can pitch 85, but he will be limited to 60, 65 pitches, maybe three, four innings. It depends on how he's doing.

But I told a couple of guys today we are preparing him mentally. He can pitch 25 pitches. If there is a problem in the first inning, we are going to remove him because this is life or death. We have to beat Japan in order to continue to the next round. We have to be as aggressive as possible and make it to the ninth inning.

I made my decision to stop the Dominican offense and I used the bullpen for that, and it almost worked. This is the way that we are going to manage the next game.

(FastScripts by ASAP Sports)