

World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals

Friday, 13 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Puerto Rico

Seth Lugo

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. Seth, how do you feel being the one selected to open for Team Puerto Rico against Italy? They've been playing good. They have a player that is Puerto Rican descendant, plus they have a coach that is also from Puerto Rico. How do you feel to play against them and the opportunity to take us to the next level in the semifinals?

SETH LUGO: Yeah, I'm excited. It's a great honor to get to start. I'm going to do the best I can to help the team win and move on to the next round.

Q. First and foremost, what has it meant to you from a family standpoint, from a personal standpoint, to connect more deeply with your Puerto Rican heritage by pitching for Team Puerto Rico?

SETH LUGO: It means a lot. Last time I played in this tournament my grandpa was still alive to see it, but I had my dad down with me in Puerto Rico. And when I was pitching my wife told me, you know, it was pretty emotional for him to see me out there playing in front of my grandpa's home country.

So it's been an honor and it's been a blast. It's been fun to work with a lot of these guys in the clubhouse. For this time of the year, this is really fun baseball.

Q. In terms of just the enthusiasm that we see associated with the Classic, how does the excitement that you feel while wearing the Puerto Rico jersey carry into the regular season as well, and maybe just shift your perspective on the game itself?

SETH LUGO: Yeah, absolutely. Especially with some of these young guys that haven't been to the Big Leagues yet. Kind of brings you back full circle to the beginning of your career, playing in front of fans and the excitement.

When we were in Puerto Rico, the games were, I feel, like



playoff games. When they were playing the national anthems for each country, you get goosebumps each time. It's really cool.

Q. With the memories of your grandpa, what did he tell you about Puerto Rico? What did you learn about Puerto Rico? I know there's not a big Puerto Rican contingent in Shreveport, but what are those memories and what do you know of Puerto Rico and what it means to be (speaking Spanish)?

SETH LUGO: For him, he would always tell me stories about his childhood. They grew up on a small piece of land over there in west Puerto Rico. But hearing stories from him were always really cool.

But as a kid, we'd always go over there and they'd cook us food. So the cuisine part of the heritage, that's what I know most about. He had a lot of brothers and sisters. I got to meet a few of them over the years, meet some cousins and uncles that I still talk to now.

I know it's a very proud island, and I hope to represent the country well.

Q. What are Seth Lugo's go-to Puerto Rican meals? What are your favorites?

SETH LUGO: My favorite is always beans and rice with green olives in it. I try my best to make my own dish like that, but it doesn't meet my grandma and grandpa's, but I still try.

Q. Tell me about facing your teammates. Pasquantino, he's been hot with the bat, three home runs versus Mexico, with Jac Caglianone (indiscernible). He has been hot with a bat. How do you approach those guys, your teammates?

SETH LUGO: I know both of them are -- they both have some really good power. Watching Vinnie for the last couple of years, I know he's patient at the plate, has a good idea with the strike zone. He'll be a situational hitter at times. And he knows how I pitch, too. It should be fun.

But at the end of the day it's business. I'm going to have to



make them both a little uncomfortable up there and really execute pitches and get after them. It's going to be head-to-head, which I haven't had against Vinnie in a few years. But I faced both of them in Spring Training this year. So I feel pretty confident that if I execute my pitches, I can win the battles.

Q. What can you tell us about pitching in this park? Particularly what are the most important things you are looking for tomorrow?

SETH LUGO: I think the biggest thing about pitching in Houston is keep the ball in the middle of the field. If they're hitting fly balls out into center field gaps it's a little safer. You've got to keep them from pulling balls down the line or shooting the ball opposite field.

It can be a pitcher's park in center field, but down the lines it's more of a hitter's park. But besides that, keep the ball on the ground and we should be okay.

Q. What are the most important things that you have in mind pitching to this Italy team that has a very, very powerful team? They have shown that home run power during the tournament.

SETH LUGO: Biggest thing is to get the first batter out of each inning. And if I can keep guys off base, I can keep their hitters more in power-swing mode -- they can't go gap to gap or hit the ball opposite field. If I can do that, I can open up some swing-and-miss, too.

Q. Want to ask about a couple of the teammates. First Martín Maldonado, you've certainly seen him play in the Major Leagues for so many years. What's it been like to work with him? Any surprises in the way he handles the pitching staff?

SETH LUGO: You know, I wouldn't say surprises. He's professional. I would say he's our team captain. So he's had a big job this whole tournament as far as planning and scheduling basically everything. So he's been great.

He's who I lean on, too, for information. And he's doing a fantastic job, especially out there on the field, too.

Q. Darell Hernaiz, of course the amazing moment he had with a walk-off homer, but just in general, as a younger, up-and-coming shortstop, what have been your observations playing with him on this team?

A. He brings a lot of energy. We got to talk for a few innings when we were down in Florida, and I'd only seen him play a couple of times. Before that we faced him in Spring Training this year.

Getting to know him and understanding how he gets that little spark of energy, it's pretty cool, especially with the home run he hit the other night. It's not surprising for his personality.

Q. Does the fact that Italy is in such a good offensive rhythm change your approach in any way? Or is it going to be business as usual for you from the mound?

SETH LUGO: Yeah, you know, I can't look at teams' hot streaks. I did catch some of that game, saw some of the pitches. If I can execute the pitches, it shouldn't affect my game plan.

Me and Maldonado are constantly talking about ways to attack different hitters. We'll stick to our approach and trust our stuff will beat their stuff.

Q. How much of a challenge and how interesting is it going to be for you as a pitcher facing those guys in such a hot streak?

SETH LUGO: Well, you know, I would say the challenging part is it's the same as this tournament's always been. You're trying to get scouting reports for players from different organizations and different countries. That's the challenge in itself, but we're doing a really good job over here. And I'm confident with the information we have and how we're using it.

Q. This park, Daikin Park is considered a neutral park when it's closed, not a lot of wind. Do you think that will be an advantage for you considering that wind or how windy it is at Hiram Bithorn in Puerto Rico? And have you spoken with Martín and Alex Cintrón, who have a lot of experience with this ballpark on where to set up the pitches for those power hitters?

SETH LUGO: Not specifically. I mean at the end of the day my pitches are going to work where I can execute them best. But I know the field in Puerto Rico is definitely pitcher-friendly. So it's going to be more ground ball-oriented than fly balls, where in Puerto Rico we could let them hit the ball in the air.

It's going to be a little different in terms of that. But at the end of the day, if I execute my pitches, we're going to be in a good spot.

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