

World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals

Friday, 13 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Italy

Manager Francisco Cervelli

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. Wondering, I saw a tweet that said people in Italy, they're in the coffee shops, they're talking about baseball. Baseball is front of mind there in a way it probably never has been before. What kind of feedback have you gotten from friends over there? What has this whole experience been like the last few days?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Crazy. A lot of things are happening now. Baseball is what people talk. So the coffee thing, they feel like, you know, we are representing the culture here. And we are putting the flag on the map.

So everybody's talking. Like in Italy, it's normal everybody is in the coffee shop or doing wine, here and there. It's all about baseball now.

Q. First and foremost, what have been some of the favorite things you've heard from the young players that you've worked with through your time there at Castiglione della Pescaia and the overall academy there in Italy. What have been some of the text messages you've received about the impact to the young kids that you're doing right now?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I've received a lot of messages from my players. But they're happy, they're watching, they're learning. They can't wait to start again the season there. I don't remember any specifics, but it's basically now they really want to do it. They really want to play. They are excited for next summer.

Q. With Aldegheri getting the ball again, what were the observations of the way that he handled the first start and just the importance that he has to your program as someone who was born and raised in Italy?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: The most important thing is he has to pitch with his strength. He's got to do what he knows and then follow the plans. But first is follow his



strengths.

And I'm not worried. He's going to have the mound again. And everybody's going to be watching in Italy. Now it's a 2:00 game, so it's better. It's going to be live. Everybody watch.

Q. I wanted to ask you a little bit about how much you've learned during the World Baseball Classic and how much you may think that this opportunity, this platform, may help guys like you, Benji Gil, Yadier Molina, Albert Pujols and Omar E. López, Latinos who aspire to be Major League managers at a time where the diversity of the managerial ranks doesn't reflect the percentage of Latinos playing Major League Baseball?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Well, I believe it's helping me a lot. I've been learning a lot in, this game. This kind of tournament, the game is fast. I've got the right coaches next to me. They help me. They teach me. I ask a lot of questions.

And when you talk about Pujols and Yadier, they don't need this. They know what to do. They are different than everybody else. Pujols, he was a great player and he's a great mentor. Everybody respects him. And Yadier was the best. And then it's a compliment for them.

Q. Tell me a little bit about the recruiting process, like when you were reaching out to some of the American -- well the American-born players in MLB -- about being on Team Italy, what were some of the things that you tried to emphasize to them about what an opportunity it would be? And why is it so special to -- why was it so special for those guys to do it?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Well, we have -- it wasn't only Ned and myself. It was more people involved -- Vinnie as well. And we had a list, about 100 players. And then we start to put everything together of what we wanted and how we wanted it.

And it was getting closer to the deadline, you start knowing that this guy's not going, this is not going. So you start talking to players and see -- because the most important part was not participate, like really want to be here. That



was the question: Do you really want to be here?

You want to do it for the right reasons. You want to represent the country of your ancestors. And the feedback was positive and then that's what we got. This group of guys, they really want to be here.

Q. What about for you? Your Italian heritage is a part of you. How personal has this tournament and your whole involvement in Italy baseball been for you?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: It means a lot, especially for my family, my dad. Last year, my grandfather passed away. I would love for him to see what's going on here because he was the one who came to Venezuela with my dad.

But I'm doing this for my last name, my last name. I grew up -- this is my culture. Even if you are born in Venezuela, I'm Venezuelan, but I spent every week with my Italian side. It was very Italian. We did everything like Italy.

And it means a lot. I talk to my father every day before or after the game. He's always crying. So for him, it means the world. If he's happy, I'm happy.

Q. What was your grandpa's name?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Francisco.

Q. And your father?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: We have like seven Francisco Cervellis -- same. But I'm the first grandson. And he passed away last year. I spent a lot of time the last four years with him in Italy. But he was so happy that I was working with this jersey and proud because the Italians are very proud with their last names.

Q. Question about the impact that Jorge Posada had on the team and your coaching staff.

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: He's been great. I call Jorge. The reason why I got him involved in the team is because of the way he describes baseball. Baseball is in his veins. It's not in regards to different flags or different countries.

I went after the coach that he is, the baseball coach that he is, the way that he speaks, conveys the message and is able to listen to questions from the team.

And he helps us figure out ways to win, how to be better, so he's been very impactful to the team.

Q. Also wanted to ask you, since you're going to be facing Puerto Rico tomorrow, what will be the plan for

the game?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I don't know. We're going to figure this out later on today. We haven't met to discuss further, but we know we're facing a traditional team, one of the best in the world with really good players, and with an elite catcher.

He's a tentative player, Maldonado, my respect towards him. And they're great friends. I know what they're about. So we've got to go after their pitching and concentrate, focus enough for the game.

Q. Piggybacking on the previous question, since Jorge Posada, being from Puerto Rico, is facing his own country tomorrow, what will you say about his emotions and everything going into the game?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I don't know. That's something you should ask him. I know I faced my home country as a player about four different occasions, and I remember facing Venezuela. Those things are put to the side once the game starts.

But I know it must be hard to play against your home country. But again, just ask him.

Q. Now you're facing Molina, which is catcher versus a catcher. Could you tell me more about that, those two great minds -- you as a coach and a player on the field.

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Well, yeah, he's like a manager with more experience than I have. Molina is someone, I have taken a look at his career. He's a fantastic player. He thinks so much into the game.

I know we're going to have a great match tomorrow and I have all respect. From what I've seen, he's the best catcher in the country, like the best I ever saw.

Q. Who is opening tomorrow?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: It will be Aldegheri.

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