

# World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals - Puerto Rico vs Italy

Saturday, 14 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

## Team Puerto Rico Manager Yadier Molina Heliot Ramos

Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Having played in this WBC with 65 pitches, now you're allowed 15 more. Would the team allow more pitches or would you complete 80?**

YADIER MOLINA: Good morning, first and foremost. With Seth, we're going to do 80, according to the rules, which will be about four to five innings.

**Q. Houston has a ballpark full of players. There's a ceiling, there's no wind. You played here before. Martín has played here before for a while. Alex Cintrón as well. Would that information help the team and the players?**

YADIER MOLINA: I think so, I think experience is always good, always helps. Martín has played during the playoffs here, a bunch of games here. And he can share this information with the rest of the team, the rest of the players.

We know this ballpark. Many players have played in this country, have played here. And we listened to their advice and we're ready.

**Q. Francisco Cervelli yesterday said you're the best catcher he's ever seen in his entire life. What kind of relationship you all had? How much respect do you have on the work that he's done with Italy?**

HELIOT RAMOS: It's a mutual respect since we used to play against each other, and Cervelli was always a good person, as well as I was with him. I have a lot of respect towards him.

Knowing that he's a manager, I'm very happy with what he's done with Italy. Very happy with what's going on in his life. So I'm very happy for his success. There's a bunch of



respect. And for him to say that fills me with joy and pride, and I feel the same towards him.

**Q. Carlos was speaking before, and I know you mentioned this before, but how proud are you of the team, without having any superstars, yet still in this tournament?**

YADIER MOLINA: We're very happy with the talent we have. We've been talking about this for quite a while now.

In regards to the ones that had to leave, it is what it is. We're playing with the players that we have now and that's what we get the effort and the heart and the love for Puerto Rico. So every time we hit a home run I feel proud of my team.

HELIOT RAMOS: I feel that most of the players that we have now, I haven't been a part of this tournament. This is my first time just like many of us. And they have stepped to the stage. Matthew Lugo, a bunch of players out there that have said how impressive, and they know what it is to win and they know what it takes to win.

**Q. It's going to be a full house. There's a ceiling. How important is it to have that extra gasoline from the Puerto Rican fans showing up and cheering you on? What role does that have in the game?**

YADIER MOLINA: It's very important knowing that you have that support, an entire country's cheering us on, and that helps, that really does help. As long as they trust the team, the talent on the team. And so just like it's said in the NBA, the fans can help a whole lot. So yes, I know this place is going to be filled with Puerto Ricans, I have no doubt about that.

**Q. What has stood out as you scouted and watched the Italian team? What impresses you or what most stands out about how they play?**

YADIER MOLINA: I think in my opinion they are similar, or are a team, in Puerto Rico. We're going to run the bases. I think they're fast. I think they have good pitching, good bullpen. I think they have a really good coaching staff. But yeah, they're kind of similar like us. We're going to play the



game hard, and we're going to run the bases.

HELIOT RAMOS: I think their IQ, the way they take the at-bats, how aggressive they are. I feel like they do have pretty good hitters that nobody talks about. But all I think is how aggressive they are.

They've got a Pasquantino and they've got Canzone, that they're pretty aggressive with the pitch middle in and all that. So they've got guys that can run. Their IQ on the bases is pretty good. Their defense is pretty good.

I mean I knew on paper they had a pretty good team. But they did surprise a lot of people, I feel like.

**Q. Six WBC, six of them, Puerto Rico advanced, and now you have the opportunity to get back to the semifinal. In regards to that, can I get your points of view in regards to the current baseball process since you guys are both in this process? And do you know if you guys are up to the level that it needs to be at?**

YADIER MOLINA: I know that the organization has been working a lot on the kids camps and kids training sessions and future talent. We've been investing more and we still need more funds to invest in our children, invest in our youth. But I think we're doing a lot. But we can do better.

I also share that thought because we want the kids to keep going to the park and play, we want their parents to take the kids to the park and play, also train, and get to the point where they can get scouted and go somewhere else to start their career. That's what we're trying to go for.

**Q. In regards to we were talking about earlier, having this young team, young roster, but what about Arenado? He's a veteran. He knows what it is to win this. How does he have a role when it comes to sharing his stories with the guys with the youngsters?**

YADIER MOLINA: Well, it was really good to hear that he wanted to play with us when we reached out to him. The player that he is, the passion that he has and the willing to win and share what he knows to the youngsters is something great. We can count on him for that.

We do have a good mixture of vets and youngsters, Nolan as well. We have a bunch of youngsters that are super talented. So, yeah, it's a good combination that we've built.

HELIOT RAMOS: Nolan, just like's been showing at this WBC, he knows what it takes to win. I think we can learn a lot from him. He's that type of vet that can help us in the long run. Do you know what I'm saying?

His work ethic, how serious he is to work hard, it's really good for us, because he's that type of caliber of player that we need. And he's very noble as well. He has his daily routine, his daily work habits. And that's something we need in this type of team.

**Q. Heliot, coming back to the U.S., could you tell me more about your experience here in the U.S.? Whenever you were in playoffs in San Juan, having the home-field advantage, but not coming to the U.S. What do you feel from your people, from your fans?**

HELIOT RAMOS: I'll never forget the experience I had in Puerto Rico. I never lived something like that ever. I played in the Caribbean series and other sorts of series. But this time around, the fans were incredible.

The love that they showed to us was something that goes beyond my thoughts. And it's just a whole country supporting you.

And I feel like here in Houston is a bunch of Puerto Ricans as well, a bunch of Puerto Rican fans. And they told us that that the airports in Puerto Rico are packed with fans coming. We know it's going to be great.

**Q. I would like to ask, what is it to have Carlos Beltrán be in the Hall of Fame? And me as a voter, I'm going to vote for you, too, sir. We're all going to vote for him right now, trust me. But if you could answer this. Beltrán going into the Hall of Fame?**

YADIER MOLINA: Thank you for that vote for me. I appreciate that. But Beltrán has been a very special person in my life. Obviously when I had -- I mean good things happen to good people, you get even happier. Especially that he's Puerto Rican, we're both from Puerto Rico, to be able to know his family and for him to have that recognition is something amazing.

I know what type of player he was, how good he was, but beyond all that, he's also a great person that likes to help Puerto Ricans. He's that type of person that wants to do something. So we're very happy about him. Super proud that he could be part of the Hall of Fame.

HELIOT RAMOS: He's an idol to all of us. I saw him play as I grew up. He was part of two eras of baseball. The type of person that he is, to help everyone, even to have a long conversation with you so you can help you become a better player, better professional.

So just with the fact that he was with us and the impact he had towards the youth was something incredible. Now knowing that he's in the Hall of Fame is something that he

truly deserves.

**Q. Talking about Beltrán, one of the cool things about his legacy, he pushed to have Spanish-speaking translator for all players in the clubhouse, which helps me and I think helps them, too. What was that like for you? I know you don't need one, but what was the impact of that for players who don't really speak fluent English?**

YADIER MOLINA: Sometimes I need one. (Laughter).

Yeah, he did great things for us as a Latino community. For the players, when you see guys coming from Japan, other Asian guys, they have the guy next to him and try to help him.

Then when you watch the Latino, we didn't have the opportunity to have someone to help you with the language. And then I remember that he was one of the first guys to push that for us, to have someone to speak for us.

So he did a great thing. I'm glad they did it. Now you have a Latino translator. They can speak freely, and that's a good thing.

**Q. You played in this tournament multiple times behind the plate. Now you're managing for the first time. What are some of the takeaways and the experience overall and the challenges you've taken on this team with Puerto Rico this series?**

YADIER MOLINA: This is my second time, my second opportunity being in this tournament. And like I said, I've got many people, many coaches next to me that help me out getting better.

But, yeah, this tournament is great. I love this tournament. Every time I get the opportunity to do it, I would do it.

But for me, it's a learning process, obviously, for me to keep pushing where I wanted to be in my future. But, I mean this tournament is great, and I'm having fun with it.

**Q. You won the championship in Melandro (phonetic) in Venezuela. Right now you're on your way to obtain a new championship and give a championship to Puerto Rico, which was ruined by Mexico. What does this mean to you to be on your way there?**

YADIER MOLINA: Well, mentality, since day one, has been to push these players, to push the whole country of Puerto Rico to go after championships because we have what it takes. We have opportunities to do so. So every

game represents Game 7 to us. We know the importance of this game. We know the importance of this tournament. And what else can I say? We have a group, a coaching staff that inject that passion, inject those good vibes, and so we're ready.

We hope to win today to continue on to the semifinal and then see where that takes us. But we're focused on today. We know the importance, and we'll see what happens.

**Q. And I think you mentioned that you would like to coach in other leagues, right?**

YADIER MOLINA: Yes.

**Q. What does it mean to you to be part of WBC?**

YADIER MOLINA: Well, I just continue to learn. And just like I mentioned before, I will hope to take the next step to coach in the Major Leagues. Also playing in this tournament, to play in winter ball and the winter league will help me to get there to coach a Major League team.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports