

World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals - Puerto Rico vs Italy

Saturday, 14 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Puerto Rico

Manager Yadier Molina

Postgame Press Conference

Italy - 8, Puerto Rico - 6

Q. Would like for you to speak in regards to how the locker room is feeling right now, how the players are feeling. Obviously you were down 8-2. It was a different game in the beginning, but then you got to 8-6 after a huge effort. It was cut short. What would you like to share with us?

YADIER MOLINA: I want to say it was a very emotional game. What else can I say? Italy came and attacked first. I just want to congratulate their coaching staff. I wish them the best as they go on to the next round. What else can I say?

It was a tough game, just like you mentioned. First half of the game, we couldn't hold on with our pitching. Then we were able to react, but it was too late.

And in regards to the locker room, we have a lot of youngsters that, they're hurting, their jersey hurts. Their soul is something that's really hurting them.

But I do want to say that I'm very proud of our team, very proud of what we've done. It's a young team. It's a team that represented our island without any reproach, and they fought to the end. We all fought to the end. We were able to unify a country once more.

It hurts, and obviously I would have wanted us to win the game and gone on to the next round. But again, I'm very proud of the guys. We fought to the end, and we want to give credit to Italy.

Q. Seems like during the first inning, you all came out aggressive. The first bat was really good. But do you think that that situation, in which the pitcher was able to adjust affected you all, because you guys could have hit first and then probably demoralized your



opponent?

YADIER MOLINA: I remember having seven or eight innings, leaving someone on base. And also on our offense, we were not up to the challenge. We were not consistent in our offense.

And our pitching took us to the next round. And then our youngster, we were able to start well. We were able to adjust.

But at the same time, Italy was adjusting, and their bats -- their hitters were doing really well today. We left all of our bases loaded. And so it also comes down to our offense. We need to do better on our offense, because that cost us.

Q. We were also talking about the players on the field, number 11, also the fans for, I think they hit over 34,000 today. Probably 80 percent were Puerto Ricans. Many flew from Puerto Rico to Houston to watch the game. Do you want to send a message to your people?

YADIER MOLINA: Yeah, I just want to say that we appreciate our Puerto Rican fans. They've always supported us. When we were in Puerto Rico, at that beautiful ballpark, it was amazing. I know that.

There's also a lot of Puerto Ricans in this city. We knew we had that factor in our favor to see the ballpark full of Puerto Ricans. So many flags out there.

We would have loved to have win this game, not just for us, but for them as well.

Q. This team showed that they could compete even with all the players that had to leave or couldn't make it. If those things weren't to have happened, do you think you would have probably made it further, you know, if all the stars were here on your roster?

YADIER MOLINA: I wouldn't want to think that way. I wouldn't want to disrespect the youngsters that came here and played for the jersey. They gave it all. They gave 100 percent.



What could have happened? No one knows. Either way, we were able to get out of where we were, and bail his effort on giving it all for his country, seeing him work day in and day out to improve, and wanting to learn from this coaching staff.

I think these youngsters are taking a lot of good things from this tournament. And one of them was to have a coaching staff the way they had and for them to have the opportunity to be with this coaching staff for two weeks. It's something that they can take for their entire career, being able to absorb the positive things that happened in this tournament.

But then to say or think about the ones that didn't make it wouldn't be fair for the youngsters.

Q. You expect your starting pitcher to get more than one out. So you're in scramble mode right there. How did you decide to deploy your pitchers like you did? And looking back, are you happy with who you brought in at each particular time?

YADIER MOLINA: I mean, I trust everyone in the bullpen. I trust all my pitchers, obviously. Seth Lugo was -- he is still an ace and to be able to get three outs in the first inning with his stuff, you don't want that.

But I think we moved the pieces with the help -- I think it was very, very good. I mean, after him we got Jovani Morán. Morán did really good in the first series. And after that you got Eduardo Rivera that pitched really well. And Luis Quiñones, he pitched really well in the first round.

We spoiled the game. It's hard that we spoiled the game, but I mean they only had two innings that they score four runs. They did what they're supposed to do when we made a mistake in the zone.

Q. There was a throw Martín Maldonado said something to the umpire, and probably complaining. You went up to him. What did you tell him right there and what message would you like to give to Maldonado since it was his last game?

YADIER MOLINA: Martín was the captain. I was very proud of his career, his efforts, not just in the clubhouse, but the last couple of days on the field. Martín, he's a winner, and he gives it all every time.

And those sorts of plays where Martín was saying something, I misinterpreted something that was not true. That's why I went up there. We cleared everything out. And it did not transcend.

Martín is the captain of this team. He was able to manage that pitching staff. And I'm very happy for his career, and we wish him the best.

Q. The opponent you faced today, given that they're all so young, they're a young team, and from what you've seen in the competition, what would you like to dissect from basically Italy?

YADIER MOLINA: Okay. So Italy, yes, Italy is a team that's been playing really well. They're undefeated, 5-0. We always respect our opponents. They're a very balanced team. They picked up youngsters -- we do about eight bases an hour. They picked up really youngsters that are fast.

Their pitching, it's something they manage super well. They have a really good coaching staff. If you know, you know their coaching staff is really good. And I know these young bucks can do really well in the semifinal. And we wish them the best.

Q. So seeing in the near future, this tournament is ending soon. It was a huge improvement for you and the team from what you picked up and what the guys picked up in and outside the field. What other things can you take from this tournament?

YADIER MOLINA: We saw a lot of young players that many people did not know. We were able to see them play in this tournament. The way that they played opened many people's eyes, especially from the fans. And not even the fans knew them.

So we believed that the future of Puerto Rico will be to keep them as a foundation and so that this can also make other youngsters want to play baseball in Puerto Rico, and we know that these young players are going to keep on improving.

I'm not sure when the next tournament will be, probably three to four years, but we're going to go at it with the young players. We know that they are very focused. We can train well. We know we have good pitchers.

We have good arms. Obviously these results did not benefit us, but I know that we have really good Puerto Rican arms, and we're going to keep on improving them, trying to help them.

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