

World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals - Puerto Rico vs Italy

Saturday, 14 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Italy

Andrew Fischer

Vinnie Pasquantino

Postgame Press Conference

Italy - 8, Puerto Rico - 6

Q. Vinnie, you alluded the other night to just the process of putting this team together, all that goes into it. Could you ever have imagined that in such a short time this team would develop the kind of chemistry it has?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: No. I could sit up here and be like, yeah, you know we've always believed everything. We believed enough to put together a competitive team. I was telling the guys in the clubhouse, they have -- like the belief I had in these guys, I don't even know if you could put a number on how much it's changed. It's just crazy.

The lack of fear from some of these, like, 21- to 24-year-olds is insane. We were just talking about it. They're learning so much so quickly and it's amazing.

That's the key to this game -- you can't play with fear. But when you're that young, and you're in these moments and the crowd is against you -- not in a bad way, the crowds here have been amazing. The Puerto Rico fans who showed up today that was incredible. And that was so loud in there.

But the fact that we're able to still go out there and play our game, that's a credit to a lot of the guys on the team who have just continued to stay consistent.

No, I guess the simple answer to your question, no, but I'm so happy about this group.

Q. When you're with a team that people don't expect to go to the semifinals for sure, what is that like when you have that underdog mentality? Is it kind of a bonding adhesive, almost, for the group?



VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Yeah, it is. We were just talking about it a little bit, today's celebration was a little bit less because I think we've learned more about each other as a group.

We come into the tournament, and you look at the schedule, and you say, okay, you have to take care of the first two. That's the only way you can advance is if you take care of Brazil and Britain.

And then it's, okay, we think it's set up for a win-or-take-all against Mexico, if everything goes according to the plan that you're thinking.

Then you win the USA game, and it's like, wait a minute, we've got a real shot here, to not just shock the world but to do some things.

Then you beat Mexico. Then you come into this game with Puerto Rico today, and you say, okay, we've got some real work to do but we can do it.

And I think the belief kind of began after the USA game, it didn't feel flukey. Somebody, you could say any win is flukey, but for us it just felt like we played a good baseball game and we came out on top.

So today, it was just come in and play a good baseball game, and if we do what we do, we win. And that's what we did. We played a clean game again, other than myself, messing up a ball at first. But other than that, we've been phenomenal.

And that's been the story of this team -- playing clean baseball, doing our jobs at home plate.

Q. Big picture, what does it mean to you to have this team in the semifinals for the first time?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: It's amazing. I don't think it would be hyperbole to say this is the best day in Italian baseball history, just getting here. It's the farthest the team's ever been.

I was a part of the team in '23 that lost to Japan in this



round. And now obviously we've made it a little bit farther and we still have a lot of work to do.

But it's incredible for the federation -- Andrew Fischer is here, ladies and gentlemen -- it's incredible for the federation, for the work that Marco and Francisco have been doing, it's just amazing.

The fact that we've been able to advance this far just gets more eyeballs on them and it's amazing.

Q. Did you have a special bottle of wine for today?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Yeah, there were some special bottles of wine. You can ask Jason Zillo more about that. But there were some special bottles of wine today.

Q. With all the media attention, both in the U.S. and Italy that this team has received, what do you wish more people understood about this Italy team?

ANDREW FISCHER: I think, like, just as a young guy, like our team chemistry has come along so fast. I think that actually started with Vinnie. Just the way he made us feel right from the jump. I felt very comfortable. So I was able to open up. And I think me opening up so quick made maybe the next younger guy open up as well.

So props to Vinnie for setting the tone for the team. It's almost like a challenge, right: How quickly can you get this group to come together and be comfortable with each other and have some team chemistry?

So that's one thing this team did really well. And I think that's a big reason why we're having a ton of success.

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: I think it's incredible that we've made -- like today, even though you could argue about why were we playing at 2:00 today when we won the pool, and now we don't get an off day if we were fortunate enough to win on Monday night.

Italy was able to watch our game today, and it was on television out there. And we've been on the front page of the newspapers. And that is what this tournament is about.

Yes, it is about winning the tournament and trying to be the best baseball team, but it's about getting eyeballs and bringing people together on the sport, which is why I think so many teams are having a blast playing, because you're playing for your country and you're playing for that national attention of, hey, look, it's the Dominican Republic or it's Venezuela or Nicaragua, wherever the country is, they're represented.

And yeah, Italy doesn't have the greatest development in baseball, and that's what we're trying to do right now. And if we continue to be successful with this -- I mean, there was baseball being played at bistros and cafes in Italy tonight over there. That doesn't happen.

So without the group that we have, it just doesn't happen. So we're getting eyeballs on the sport and we're bringing people together. And to me that's what the World Baseball Classic is about, is bringing people who wouldn't normally watch baseball, to get them to watch baseball.

And that's where we do our jobs is just go play and show how much fun you can have with the espressos, whatever it is, showing Italian kids that baseball is a game that you can pick up. And we're trying to expand that worldwide.

Q. Vinnie, you talked obviously about the young players coming through, and Andrew, you talked about, one, what has Vinnie done, Andrew, beyond bringing everybody together to be that leader, like you almost seemingly taking control of the mound visits as well, you're kind of calming the players during the game as well as what's going on outside?

ANDREW FISCHER: Yeah, I guess off the field he's done a great job being in touch with a lot of the guys. You're kind of forced into an atmosphere to get to know each other really, really fast.

As you can probably imagine, we're a bunch of guys, very competitive. Some of us play the same position. Like, you can imagine it's automatic animosity, right. It's very easy to look at each other, like, oh this guy's been in Triple-A and I've only been in A ball. And this guy's got X amount of years in the big leagues, and I deserve X playing time or whatever.

But Vinnie's done a good job just being able to help us almost come together as one and put that all aside and really engrave in us what the end goal is. The end goal is to bring back a title and win a championship.

So how fast can we all get on the same page. None of that matters. It doesn't matter whether you're playing. It doesn't matter if you're hitting third. Doesn't matter if you bat zero or bat a thousand. Just contribute, whether it's in the locker room, in the clubhouse or actually out there on the field, or it's Greg coming in and slamming the door for us or it's another guy setting up that inning.

I think he's done a good job setting the tone for us. And, like I said, ton of props to him.

Q. Vinnie, you talked about it a minute ago about

playing clean baseball. But what on the field has made this team so good? To be undefeated at this point, what are you doing right out there that has led to this record?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: We're believing. And as simple of an answer as that is, that's what it is, is when a ground ball gets hit to him, even if it's in the seventh inning and I'd prefer him to just step on third base, he has the belief in himself that he's just going to hit me in the chest. And what did he do? He just hit me in the chest, like it was nothing.

That's what this team does. Every time there's a ball hit, I think it's going to get caught. Sam Antonacci, that guy, definition, ball player. He gets really angry on the field, which is kind of funny once the game is over.

But I could just rattle off names. Like Nick Morabito hasn't even really gotten any run, and I trust that guy at the plate right now against Edwin Diaz if he were to have to go up there.

And I think a lot of that is built from the off-the-field stuff of just getting to know guys, what makes them tick. The joke that we have through a thing that we did is, like, you're at a 10 right now, I need you at a 3. We talk about it, what can we do as a group to maximize the individual talent?

That's what being a team is. And kind of the nice thing about this tournament, even though we are getting like revenue money is you're not being paid. You're just playing. And that is the most pure form of baseball. Nobody is wondering about arbitration, or I'm in my last year of free agency -- and there's nothing wrong with that, because the adult business decisions have to be made. But we're fortunate enough with this team, that it's, just, hey, we can go play. That's an amazing feeling for anybody.

So it's just been incredible. And we've done a phenomenal job so far. There's still work to be done. But that's what it is. It's belief in the guy next to you.

Q. You guys are a fun story, and sometimes that leads to dumb questions, so apologies. But Vinnie is there anything in those espressos that makes you a stolen base threat? And Andrew does the Frank Sinatra tattoo make you an especially good representative of a team made up of primarily Italian Americans?

ANDREW FISCHER: Yeah, so my whole arm --

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: He's showing you his suit sleeve. Just take your shirt off, show them (laughter).

ANDREW FISCHER: Yeah, it's a ton of New Jersey stuff, a lot of stuff that reminds me of home. So, yeah, I've got Frank Sinatra up here. But I think just kind of rewinding -- I almost want to go off the prior question of us like leaning on each other.

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Wants to answer the previous question.

ANDREW FISCHER: I think a small shout-out to Saggese. He's a guy hasn't really been playing a ton. Then all of a sudden he finds himself playing shortstop in the two-hole for us. And he set up a couple innings for us offensively. He's been a guy in the clubhouse that I've looked up to.

He's done a ton for me just giving me confidence to be out there. Like, we talked about that play I made at third where I threw across the diamond. We were on the bus the other day, and he was talking to me like, listen, it doesn't matter if it's ugly out there or -- if you get an out, you get an out. Just go play baseball. Having a guy like that to my left is tremendous.

Another guy, Berti, Mastrobuoni, who is not with us right now, but these guys have been, like, tremendous, tremendous help for us in the clubhouse. Like, Sam being able to be himself out there on the field and perform the way he is is, a lot of it is because of these guys who were in our clubhouse.

Like, I'm taking ground balls with Dezenzo every single day at third base. And I'm learning from him every single day.

So I think the coaches have done a good job putting together this team with a lot of older guys who have experience with younger guys who are open minded to take the advice from those guys.

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Espresso make me run fast. Sometimes you get a read and -- that guy was gross, by the way. His stuff is disgusting. He's with the Red Sox, I think? He's young, too, right, like 21, 22?

That guy -- what's his first name? Eduardo Rivera. That fastball moved like I've never seen before. But, yeah, I got a read on him -- I've never been thrown out. So not a big deal for me. Just take the base.

Q. Vinnie, I know this is the case for you that you take pride in being Italian. Has this made you feel more Italian? Has this made you feel closer to your culture. Andrew, same question for you.

ANDREW FISCHER: I think growing up on the Jersey Shore, you can imagine I'm around it a lot. Bunch of guys

with cut-off shirts and huge gold chains and everything else. That's the basic description of my friend group, like a bunch of guys.

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: We all know the nickname for those guys, right? (Laughter).

ANDREW FISCHER: They're awesome, though, they're at home screaming at their television wondering why I'm singing my walk-up song while I'm walking out.

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: They're not the only ones, by the way.

ANDREW FISCHER: I guess I'm happy that we're here representing them. Italian culture is engraved in New Jersey. A lot of Italian food back at home. I think I eat it six days a week. I love it. So, yeah, to answer your question, being here and representing it, it definitely has brought some light to it in my life.

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Yeah, and I think a lot of that comes from who we're around every day. Starts with Marco Mazzieri, I keep bringing up his name, but he's just an incredible man.

All the Italian guys that we have -- and I don't say that -- the guys that are from Italy and play in Italy, that's who I'm referring to when I say that, Claudio Scotti and Gabriele Quattrini and Andres Annunziata, I believe we worked on that today. I know I'm missing guys, I'm sorry for missing them, but, like, they're helping me learn the culture a lot, which is amazing.

I'm just trying to learn from those guys because over the next three years, we won't be spending a whole lot of time with each other. I'm just trying to take as much as I can because I know there's a lot of people that are upset that we represent Italy, being Italian-American, but I take so much pride in it because it's my roots.

My family came over for a better life to America, and I honestly don't have any issue representing those members of my family. And it's just super cool to be given this opportunity from these guys because it's just cool.

I don't know, I don't have a reason other than that it's cool. It's cool to be able to learn about your history and being able to perform for people in a country that baseball doesn't exist at this level, and we're trying to get it to exist at a level somewhat like this.

And this team has bigger goals than playing in the WBC. And we don't take that lightly because the World Baseball Classic means everything to us. It's an opportunity to meet

new people. It's an opportunity to learn more about your culture. I couldn't be more honored to be here, and so, yeah, it does help me get closer to my Italian heritage.

Q. Vinnie, did you remember to take the wine bottle out of the paper bag today?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Yeah, he didn't even give me the option to not take it out. Jason made an adult decision to not let me do that.

Q. Could you speak to the poise that Greg Weissert showed coming in in the eighth and stopping the bleeding and then slamming the door in the ninth?

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: You know what we talked about, you like that one TikTok video or whatever where you say the name and then you say something?

ANDREW FISCHER: Yeah.

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Greg Weissert.

ANDREW FISCHER: Dog.

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: That's it. Greg Weissert is a dog. That was awesome. The guy shows like no emotion and you need that from some guys. I mean, the place was going nuts today. I don't know how, decibel-wise, where it was compared to our last two games. Team Puerto Rico fans showed out, and it was awesome. It was getting real loud in there. Greg being able to come in, slam the door.

You know, shout out to Francisco for keeping him in there too. That takes some stones to leave a guy in there. I'm sure Boston will be calling about that. The other teams are dealing with teams calling us too.

But it was awesome. It was great to see from Greg, and he's been phenomenal for us this entire series.

ANDREW FISCHER: You could kind of go down the list right? Every guy that threw for us today, you didn't even, more guys who are in our pen, like, I have a ton of trust in them because of the culture we've built over the past couple days. And they're just veteran guys.

Like he said, he showed a ton of poise out there. And I have all the confidence in the world, we give the ball to anyone in our bullpen. You can go through the list.

And I'm excited to see what these guys do for us moving forward again in Miami.

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: It was kind of fun watching him

do a press conference. I feel like I'm watching a
21-year-old version of myself up there. You're doing great.
You're doing great.

ANDREW FISCHER: I appreciate it.

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