

World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Australia vs Czech Republic

Monday, 13 March, 2023

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

Team Czech Republic

Pavel Chadim

Pregame Press Conference

Q. It's a big day today, what's in your mind right now?

PAVEL CHADIM: This is the day for the elimination game. We couldn't make it to round two, but for Czech Republic's baseball, this is such an honor to represent the European region, and when we play against Australia, we show how we respect them and we play hard.

Team Australia has a great history of baseball, and this opportunity is such a big thing. It's such a big joy for us.

PETR ZYMA: Of course we are so happy participating in the WBC tournament, playing three solid games, and we are so pleased with what we did, what we accomplished. One more game to go, and then we would like to once again show the world how we could play solid baseball.

Today we still have a slight chance if we win. Our hope never goes away.

Q. Yesterday, Lukas Ercoli, not the start you guys wanted, but he didn't pitch poorly. Another day, those balls get caught. Ground ball through the first base hole, the fielder is there. How is he doing and what have you guys talked to him, if you've said anything to him?

PAVEL CHADIM: It's not easy for any player, but I believe that Lukas is enough strong. We are not counting on him for this much, but you know me, a little joke, on Wednesday, he will be ready.

PETR ZYMA: Well, in the first inning, there was a few balls, like the one hit to Marek Chlup in center field. Great catch, but just at the last second, it popped off his glove, and then there was a few bloopers, a few ground balls through the infield.

So it was tough luck for us in the first inning, but luckily we bounced back. He's just fine. I think we saved him, his



pitch count, so he will be ready next week if possible.

Q. You mentioned there is a way for you guys forward. Have you been doing the math and figuring out exactly what you need to do, or are you just going out, get the W and letting everything else kind of take care of itself?

PETR ZYMA: Our job as players is to show up, get ready for every game. Every game is the same to us. We want to simplify the game, try to not think too much. Basically focus on the things we can control and right now, our approach will be to have good at-bats against really good Australian teams, play strong defense behind Schneider, and any kind of math, that's not something we focus on. Our goal is to play as best as possible and win this ballgame.

PAVEL CHADIM: At first we are playing for WBC 2026. Second, we are playing for ranking points for world ranking. We want to be on Premiere 12. And third, we don't want to lose.

Q. So Martin Schneider, I guess, is starting today. He was who you turned to against Spain. What was that conversation like, and have you talked to him this morning or last night?

PAVEL CHADIM: In the morning, he sends me a message that my pants, No. 13, are in his room.

And I answer him, "Let them. Maybe it's a sign. Today is the 13th, and my pants, number 13 are there." Never know. And that's all that we have spoke.

PETR ZYMA: Schneidy is ready. There's not much talking. There is no need for talking with Schneidy. He's locked in. We played a lot of good music on the bus here, good 'ole Czech country music, and we have a good rhythm right now.

Q. Sasaki came by this morning with a small gift, and I guess an apology to Willie Escala for hitting him with the hardest fastball I've ever seen in my life. What was that moment like to see Roki and how special is that for Willy and the team?



PETR ZYMA: That was a wow moment. The Japanese culture never stops to amaze me each day as we are here, this once again took it to another step, another level as a superstar that he is; that he took his time to come to the bus, meet Escala and send us a bunch of candy and sign a ball for Willie, it was a huge sign of respect.

And we are so happy to be in Japan to experience this. This is something that is really close to our hearts, and we like this. We really like it. We truly enjoy this.

PAVEL CHADIM: He reminded me that baseball is not just war, business, but gentlemen and the sport of gentlemen.

And I'm going to use this moment to thank Major League Baseball for organizing this tournament and how they help us and develop for our motivation.

I want to say thank you, Japan, for their hospitality. Japan fans, they are in our hearts. Here, we felt great and enjoyed our time. And if our destiny will give us, I am looking forward to be here after three years.

Q. I think every player on the roster has appeared so far except due bow have I. Is he available today?

PAVEL CHADIM: Small correct. Around any was here last against Japan, quality at-bat, full count. It looks like just one guy from 30-man roster will not have this edition of WBC experience, but never know.

Q. Obviously you have a huge fan group behind you and you've turned a lot of Japanese fans into Czech baseball fans and Petr was able to meet your father. What is it like to have them here and what are some of the mentals that you've received that maybe stand out in your memory?

PETR ZYMA: Our fans, we are so grateful they are here. They traveled halfway around the world and they enjoy it. They are experiencing intense moments as we are. Whenever I speak to them, they are overwhelmed by the atmosphere, by Tokyo, by the Japanese hospitality. My dad told me a story after we won against China that he went to the subway to get to the hotel and there were so many people giving high-fives, they all knew what was happening. They knew how big a moment for us that was, and he said he never experienced that in his life. You know, he traveled around the world quite a bit and played baseball quite a bit. To him, I'm so glad I got a chance to bring him here to Tokyo.

I told him, you've got to be in Tokyo because it's going to be one unique experience. I'm glad that my dad and

another 200 people from our closest, they found a way to get here because it will be priceless moment for the rest of their lives.

PAVEL CHADIM: What to say? My son is here. We were ten years ago in the little league World Series, and I felt it was an unbelievable moment for father and son. And maybe this moment is still strong, like ten years ago. He supported us here. I wanted to say thank you to all the fans, but especially him. And in the morning, I asked him if he can buy Japan fighting sign for me because his number is 13, too. But I don't know if he's not sleeping, I don't know.

Q. A win, you might be able to advance. Australia also might be able to advance. Obviously you're not interested in that but what kind of statement can you make about Czech Baseball today, and then the fact that two nations that are not historically baseball nations could advance over a team like Korea, what does this say about the global game right now?

PETR ZYMA: Baseball is a beautiful game. You never know what can happen. It gives hope. It gives motivation. You are never out of the fight. When you stick to it, you stick to the fundamentals, and motivation is a big factor for us. We finally made a huge step in Regensburg, and we want to make sure that we are on track what we established in Regensburg. We didn't want to come to Tokyo just to be here. We wanted to win and learn, and that's what we've been doing the last three days.

Today, I will make sure that we are about to fight, put up the good fight against a very strong team, and we will leave the Tokyo Dome with our heads raised high.

PAVEL CHADIM: It's another gift for us, and another game with better team than we are, and in games with better opponents, we can be better, and it's not easy to find games, exhibition games, and any games with better teams, especially Top 10 teams in the world.

Q. Let me ask you one question. Talking about sport in Czech Republic, the ice hockey is probably the most famous sport. What is the reason why you choose baseball? For instance, what's the reason why you choose baseball, and have you ever felt you are envious with Czech ice hockey players because they are professional athletes, and instead, you are not a professional baseball player.

PETR ZYMA: Me personally, I start playing baseball when I was a kid because my father loves baseball. So when I was I think six or seven years old, I start playing baseball. Since then, I'm always thinking, focusing on playing

baseball. I never felt any envy feeling against ice hockey professional players. This is my decision. This is my choice. Baseball is what I choose.

Of course, I show a lot of respect to the ice hockey professional players. But at the same time, I have no regret being a baseball player.

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