

World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Australia vs Czech Republic

Monday, 13 March, 2023

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

Team Australia

Dave Nilsson

Mitch Neunborn

Tim Kennelly

Postgame Press Conference



history going forward to the second round WBC tournament. What's the plan for the quarterfinal, if there is any?

DAVE NILSSON: Yeah, the plan is to go home tonight, enjoy being around the team and all the support staff and family. Make sure we really have a good night of reflecting on what we've achieved.

We'll wake up tomorrow. We'll have a light work out and at the end that have light work out, we'll start preparing for our next opponent but I don't want this moment to leave too soon. I want the guys to really be able to reflect and enjoy it, but there will come a time they will have to turn on, but that won't be until tomorrow.

Australia 8, Czech Republic 3

Q. What's in your mind right now and briefly tell us about the game this afternoon.

DAVE NILSSON: Yeah, extremely proud of the whole group, not just the players, support staff but everyone that's been involved along the way. It's good to get through the second round and there's a sense of relief because we worked really hard it. Was a tough game.

I thought we played really well the who will game. I thought we swung the bats really well the whole game. We didn't have much to show for it early on first seven innings, but our offense stuck to it and came through in the end, so I think a pretty good day all around.

Q. Do you have any thoughts on today's game?

TIM KENNELLY: Yeah, we are going to you to the quarterfinals. We got the win in the end. Yeah, tip your cap to the starting pitcher. He did well. We battled and then broke through in the end and piled on a few runs. Super excited for the playing group and yeah, we worked hard to get to this point and excited to get through to the quarterfinals.

MITCH NEUNBORN: Super excited to be part of a team like this, and the boys were very resilient, great at-bats. We stuck it out, did really well. At the end of the day we are trying to do something pretty cool here and make some history happen, so to go to the quarterfinals and be the first team in the WBC history for Australia is something very, very special.

Q. Congratulations ever on the first time ever in

Q. What's your impression facing Team Cuba in the quarterfinals?

DAVE NILSSON: Obviously very talented, filled with a lot of great baseball players. I'm sure they will give us a really tough battle. Again we haven't dove into that yet and we are not going to yet. We are going to enjoy today and tomorrow night we'll start diving into Cuba and everything they are going to throw at us.

Q. Do you have any impression for Team Cuba, please share your thoughts, please.

TIM KENNELLY: Yeah, like he said, they are a talented bunch of baseball players and we have played against them a lot. We haven't gotten over the line in recent times but we've been around the mark. Super excited with this playing group we have got. We are going to go out and play with no fear and give it everything we've got. Getting to the quarterfinals is cool, but getting to Miami would be cooler.

Q. Your impression of Cuba?

MITCH NEUNBORN: I have to agree there, we have to focus on what we have done today and really, really soak it in, enjoy the time and when tomorrow comes around, we can get rethought and think about what our next plan of attack is and just enjoy the moment we are in and take it day-by-day.



Q. Do you have any strategy or thought against Cuba, first time ever in Australian history, advancing to the quarterfinal, what's in your mind?

DAVE NILSSON: At this point in time, I have zero thought about Cuba in my mind and I'm not going to think about them until tomorrow night.

Q. Can you introduce the two kids?

DAVE NILSSON: That's my son, Eli Nilsson, and to my right is his friend, Cooper Tiechman. They are our unofficial bat boys.

Q. After the game against South Korea, you said that the home run, you wouldn't rank it in the history of Australian baseball but you said at the time it's one of the most clutch hits you've seen since you've been in the program. What you saw in the seventh inning, what would you say about the hit that put you guys in the lead?

DAVE NILSSON: I'm probably going to give you the same answer. Out of respect for those who have played before us and other victories, I don't know but I know tonight was an extremely big hit from Logan Wade, and it would be up towards the top of the tree.

Q. First, congratulation, huge win. I have two questions. My first is, Tim, two amazing catches, big RBI late in the game. How important is he to this team, and to this program? And second, I know Tim Atherton, the co-captain can't be here and we are all wishing him well. Is this win also for him and how is he a part of this team as well?

DAVE NILSSON: First of all, Tim Kennelly is one of our captains so that shows you how much we respect him and how much of an influence and leader he is not just with the older guys but with the younger players. Amongst the coaching staff, we trust him and we talk to him quite often around that.

In regard to Tim Atherton, same thing. We have so much respect for him and all the work he's done and he's definitely helped contribute to get to where we are right now.

TIM KENNELLY: You want me to answer that? Yeah, love being on this team. Yeah, Atherton is a great friend of mine, and yeah, he's always going to be a part of this team, and bummed that he's not here with us today but yeah, he's got us to this point and just a really good human.

Q. How does the role of the Australian Baseball League play into Australia making a hundred here and getting to the quarterfinals of this tournament?

MITCH NEUNBORN: It's pretty important but we are all a team here and getting our at-bats and getting our arms ready, so this is pretty important. But when we get here it's all about Team Australia and what we can do to make history and really enjoy the time we have together. Getting the group together is awesome.

But in saying that, coming off the ABL has helped a lot of people get their reps in and get their arms healthy. But at the end of the day, we are all a team. We don't really think about the ABL as such, just the preparation it gives us to be able to get here.

TIM KENNELLY: Yeah, without the Australian Baseball League, I'm not here playing. That's plain and simple. It gives me a chance to play professional baseball and play at the standard that it takes to play in the World Baseball Classic.

That being said, the ABL is perfect for our preparation. Like Mitch said, we prepare to come away but when we go away the ABL is background noise and we prepare as a team and we prepare as a team to play against each country we play against.

Super important for a lot of guys and definitely super important for me.

Q. You scored in the first inning and from until the seventh inning, you couldn't get a score. It was 1-2-3 innings. What was the reason why you couldn't get a score in the middle of the game?

DAVE NILSSON: It wasn't very smart hitting. Our hitters kept hitting the ball right at their defenders. They hit the ball very well and our guys swung the bats very well but sometimes you cannot control where the line drive goes, and I think we had five or six balls right at them. I was really pleased with the way we swung the bats the whole game.

Q. It's an historical moment. You break through the wall and you are going to make history. What's the next point that Team Australia is going ahead in the future, and also, what was the success point of you breaking the barrier and first time ever going into the second round?

DAVE NILSSON: First of all, I have good players, and I think we prepared really well. I think there's a belief in this

group that if we prepare very well, which we did, we are going to put ourselves in a good position and over the last four days you've seen that we have played really well and that's off the back of just some really hard work from all our players. Our preparation I think was right on point.

Q. You talked about the celebration, you're going to be with your families, you have family up on the stage right now. So a tough question, how excited for you for the victory that you're going on to the second round and how excited are you to represent Australia and Australian baseball now and in the future?

COOPER TIECHMAN: I think it's a really exciting achievement for Team Australia. The whole tournament they fought well, yeah.

ELI NILSSON: It's been a really funk experience to win, all of what's happened, it's been really fun. It's been a real journey to be with this team.

Q. What do you hope the impact of this tournament will be on Australia and the perception of baseball in Australia, and where the future can go based off what you guys have achieved; you're not done yet, but what you have already achieved.

TIM KENNELLY: I'm glad you put in that we're not done yet because yeah we're not done yet. It's cool to get through the quarterfinals, and if we get through to Miami, the last four teams, that's going to be pretty cool.

That being said, there's a lot of people, a lot of Australian baseball fans back home that are watching, a lot of family and friend that are here that have thrown all the way to Japan to watch us play. You're representing your teammate and you're representing your family and you're representing your friend and everyone that follows Australian baseball back home. A lot of kids are watching the games, there's a lot of Australian Baseball League fans watching games. It's cool, and if it's something that they can aspire to be part of this team and know that the quarterfinals, the semifinals is not out of our depth and we can play baseball.

Really super excited for this playing group and for our fans back home.

MITCH NEUNBORN: Yeah, like Tim said, it's something that you look forward to as a kid. By watching this, you're carving through a path to the future and they can believe they can make it to the next level and enjoy the game as much as we do, showing all the fans that support us all through the years, in the off-season, family coming here. It's all representing everyone in Australia, not just the team

itself. So it's an amazing experience and hopefully we can carve the path to the future to believe they can do it as well.

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