

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Israel vs Puerto Rico

Monday, 13 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Israel

Ian Kinsler

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Different lineup from yesterday. You have still Lavarney catching. Garrett Stubbs getting a day off?

IAN KINSLER: Yeah. His knee is bothering him a little bit. We had some communications with the Phillies. They prefer that he is down for the day, give him a day off and let him try to recover and feel good for tomorrow. You know, don't want to push the envelope with him and his knee, so that's where we're at.

Q. With Colton Gordon, are you going to run him up all the way to his pitch count like you did with Dean Kremer yesterday?

IAN KINSLER: Dean actually came out short of his pitch count. He had 55 to give us, and I think he came out at 48 maybe. You know, he pitched a very clean four innings, so it will be the same with Colton. We'll kind of gauge the way the game is going. Not very high-stress innings for Dean yesterday, so that plays into the decision also, and we'll go from there.

Q. Were there any relievers that you plan on using back to back, or have you given no order on those, on using relievers back-to-back days.

IAN KINSLER: Yeah, there are a couple of guys that are okay to go back to back, and we'll try to arrange our bullpen accordingly.

Q. How much do you see these games as must-win? Is there any time where you can just relax and sit back, or are all of these games where you have to be fully involved?

IAN KINSLER: Yeah, they're all fully involved. You want to win every game in these tournaments. You never know, especially runs scored, runs given up, the tie differential, those sort of things, you have to play until the last out is made. That's what we're going to do.



Q. How confident are the guys in the room that they can make a splash and cause some chaos in this pool?

IAN KINSLER: This is a confident bunch. You know, they're here. They understand that they're ready. They played a very good first game. They gelled quickly in the exhibition games. They're ready to prove themselves.

Q. What do you think it will be facing the environment for the next game?

IAN KINSLER: The environment is going to be loud. It's going to be a lot of excitement. Obviously, not for our side. It will probably be a little bit more quiet for our side, but anything that adds more energy to the game and anything that brings more excitement is always good for the players.

It just ups your focus level. It allows you to play at a higher speed. Having people in the stands is always better. It's way more fun to play with a full crowd.

Q. Just a little bit more on Stubbs. What's going on? You have to send him for testing? Do you have a replacement player in your mind? Where do you stand on this right now?

IAN KINSLER: Yeah, we have a couple of players, replacement players, in mind just to get ahead of it, just to make sure if he wakes up tomorrow and it is still feeling sore, we have some catching options.

He just woke up sore. I don't know exactly what happened yesterday in the game. I'm not sure he knows exactly what happened in the game yesterday, but he woke up sore. His knee was bothering him a little bit, and then you go through the process of contacting the club, letting them know what's going on, and then just kind of going from there.

Q. Did the Phillies at any point say that maybe it's time for him to leave the Israeli team?

IAN KINSLER: I didn't have a conversation with the Phillies. It was Garrett who had a conversation with the



Phillies, and so I'm not sure exactly how that went, but he is still here. I think from what I understand, he wanted to stay here an extra day and see if his knee feels good waking up tomorrow, and feels confident that he can play and then we'll go from there.

Q. Just one quick thing on a separate subject: When Yadi was up here before, he was talking about how the replay room is a little bit in a delay. There can be like 10 to 15 seconds. Is that a challenge for you, or have you guys figured out a way to deal with it?

IAN KINSLER: Yeah, it's a little bit of a challenge. Everyone is dealing with the same replay system right now, so as far as an advantage or disadvantage, it's not there. It's just a little bit of a challenge as far as the coaching staff, trying to decipher if it's a play to challenge or not.

Honestly, the jumbotron in centerfield seems to be pretty quick with replays. The coaching staff on field has the opportunity to watch that pretty quickly, and then you just try to make your best decision.

I think it's a little tough right now. It's not as in-depth as you would have in the middle of a Big League season or something like that, but trying to make it fair for the teams overseas and the teams here in the U.S. is obviously a gamesmanship type of thing. Just trying to make your best informed decision as quickly as possible really.

Q. You're managing against Yadier Molina tonight, another well-established Major League veteran like yourself. I was wondering the nature of your relationship with him or how often you crossed paths in your careers?

IAN KINSLER: That brings up a lot of past losses. A tough one in 2011. He was on the other side in a World Series that went seven games. We always seem to match up.

I think in 2017 in the World Baseball Classic, we matched up in the championship game. It always seems like when there's a huge game, I had to say hello to Yadi when I was walking up to the plate, which is not pleasant because it always seems like he was a step ahead.

Managing against him is going to be a blast. I have a ton of respect for him and what he's done in the game. Obviously, his knowledge of the game as a catcher and looking at it from behind. It's going to be a lot of fun, and hopefully it's an exciting game.

Q. You saw the game last night, Venezuela against Puerto Rico. What are you going to do to beat Puerto

Rico today? And also, another question because in the same World Series, you won the World Series with the Boston Red Sox, right?

IAN KINSLER: Yes.

Q. I want to ask you about Alex Cora and his skills as coach.

IAN KINSLER: I watched some of the Venezuela-Puerto Rico game. I was eating dinner. It seems like Venezuela is playing really good baseball right now. The first two games that they played, they swung the bats really well. They seem to pitch the ball really well. Playing good defense. They seem to be playing really well right now.

This tournament is funny. A team like Puerto Rico, who is usually always in it at the end, you can play a bad game. You saw the U.S. get beat by Mexico yesterday. We also saw a pool of every team be tied with 2-2. So this tournament is wild.

I don't even remember the other two questions. It was something about the World Series and Alex Cora. Oh, how we're going to win the game today? Yeah, I like that. (Laughter).

Q. (Off microphone).

IAN KINSLER: Yeah, the atmosphere is going to be fun. It's going to be a lot of excitement. Honestly, we're a scrappy team, and we have to keep the score close. You know, we have to give ourselves an opportunity every inning to either take the lead or tie the game.

If they get too far ahead, it's going to be tough for us to come back. We want to keep it tight. A lot of that is pitching and defense.

Then with Alex, I actually talked to Alex today about Richard Bleier, one of our relief pitchers. I talked to him on the phone, and it was good to talk to him. Obviously, I was with him when we won a World Series in 2018. So any time you see someone or hear from someone from a team like that, it always brings back good memories. I love talking to AC.

Q. Talk about the starting pitcher, Gordon. Actually he graduated from the University of Central Florida in Orlando. Talk about his background. I know he was hurt, Tommy John surgery. How is he feeling for today?

IAN KINSLER: Like you said, he had surgery. Recovered from it. Pitched in the Arizona Fall League this last fall and



threw the ball really well.

I think he threw in an exhibition game for us. I think he got up to 28 pitches I think he threw in one of our exhibition games. He looked fine. He seems healthy. He seems upbeat, ready to go.

I know he is excited to be in this environment. He has never pitched in an environment like this before, so it's going to be a learning experience for him. And also, those types of moments can bring out greatness in a player. It's going to be fun to watch him and watch him learn from this game.

Q. Some of the players on the team are going to be playing against players they've grown up watching. Do you remember when that happened for you when you first came to the Big Leagues?

IAN KINSLER: Yeah.

Q. What advice would you give for them to help them stay in had the moment?

IAN KINSLER: My first Big League at-bat was against Curt Schilling. Honestly, the one player that stood out to me my first Big League Spring Training before I actually made a roster was Ray Durham. I don't know if you remember the name Ray Durham.

For some reason that at-bat I was playing second base. He was the first lefty of the game. I'm, like, all right, this guy is going to rifle one in my direction. I better be ready. That's Ray Durham standing there.

I think it's a little bit different in Spring Training when you know you have a little bit more freedom. Obviously, results around as important in Spring Training. If you make an error, you can always recover and work on it the next day and things like that.

I don't know if the guys on the team have enough time to stop and think, I'm playing on the same field as so-and-so. It's a high-intensity game, and you don't really have time to think like that. I think after the game they'll probably process that and realize what they're doing and that they're not that far away from achieving their dreams.

Q. Just two things: First off, do you have a plan for starting pitcher for Game 3?

IAN KINSLER: Not yet. I don't know when the official deadline is, but we'll have it by then for sure.

Q. How confident are you feeling about the game

today?

IAN KINSLER: I'm feeling good. I think that we have just a good a shot as anybody. We played a really good game yesterday. We had a lot of opportunities. You know, we got a lot of base runners. We just didn't really break through until the end of the game.

So I felt like offensively we were doing our parts. Obviously, on the mound we did our part. We pitched the ball really well and kept the game tight, like I was saying before.

I'm feeling good. I think any time you play one of these three teams... Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Dominican... you have to play a really solid baseball game, and that's what we're looking to do.

Q. Ian, I know you were involved pretty heavily with the recruitment process for the team. So after all those months of work, how validating was yesterday's win? And, two, what's the vibe in the clubhouse today? How are guys feeling about tonight's game?

IAN KINSLER: It's a lot of fun to, I guess, scout players that you necessarily wouldn't have scouted before and get to know about them and their history and where they're at professionally. So that was a lot of fun.

Then seeing them all come together -- some of the guys I didn't even know what they looked like, honestly. I just know their numbers and where they're at and where they came from and things like that, and knowing the names and then finally seeing all the faces and everybody come together and playing a good game yesterday was very rewarding. It was a lot of fun.

The locker room was obviously -- it was a very good mood. Right now everybody seems very loose and ready to play ball.

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