

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Venezuela vs Israel

Wednesday, 15 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Israel

Ian Kinsler

Pregame Press Conference

Q. What's your message to the team? You had a thrilling win and two tough losses. What's your message to the team going into today's game?

IAN KINSLER: To compete. You know, put the best game face on and get ready to compete. You know, we're not going to just roll over and throw this game away. I think there's still experience to be had. You know, we're going to do our best to win today.

Q. What's your biggest takeaway from the tournament up until now?

IAN KINSLER: That we qualified for the next one is probably the biggest takeaway.

Q. Out of all the pitchers, so far only Jake Fishman hasn't pitched a game. Is there a plan to get him into the game today?

IAN KINSLER: Yeah.

Q. Ian, a couple here. The first one, just with the young guys that you have here, having them facing the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, now Venezuela today, how much does this help for them going forward not only for the organization, but knowing they're probably going to be here again in 2026?

IAN KINSLER: It's a good gauge for these guys to understand the level of play, what it takes to win games here. I think in the past Team Israel has been in pools that are a little bit more friendly.

You know, this is obviously -- going into the tournament everyone knew this pool was the most difficult. Basically three All-Star teams, Major League All-Star teams. It was very difficult for Team Israel, ourselves, and Nicaragua. It's just a difficult pool.



So for our players for them to understand that, to experience that, and know what it feels like to play at this level is important.

Q. I also wanted to ask you about Miggy. You obviously play with him in Detroit. Having prime Miggy down there. How special is it going to be to see him on the other side today?

IAN KINSLER: I saw him the first practice day before we took our team picture and gave him a big hug. He was running around like a little kid. He is all excited to be here, like always.

I think this is his fifth World Baseball Classic, so he is used to this type of crowd and this environment. They're moving onto the next round. You know, Miggy has always been a staple on Team Venezuela and obviously in Major League Baseball, so it's always good to see him.

Q. Can you talk about what this whole experience has been like for you now that you have been through a few games coaching, wearing "Israel" on your chest as a manager, not just as a player?

IAN KINSLER: Yeah, I've learned a lot. Honestly, a tremendous amount. Just with Brad (Ausmus) as my bench coach, through two exhibition games, through three World Baseball Classic games I definitely feel a lot more comfortable now than I did at the beginning. So there's a lot of growth there. It's been a good experience for me. It was really helpful having the coaching staff that we had.

Q. Ian, you talked about the biggest takeaway being qualifying for the next tournament. Beating Nicaragua the way you guys did it against Jonathan Loáisiga coming back at the end, looking forward for Israel baseball, what do you think is the next step to keep developing Israel baseball, the talent there, and what's the next step?

IAN KINSLER: I mean, to create a program that's consistent, you need kids to play. You need youth to play and want to play, but also going into the next WBC to be able to get commitments from the players that are eligible to play that are good big league players. We had a lot of



options. Our roster was a lot different at the beginning of this tournament. As Spring Training comes around, every roster has it. Even the Latin teams in this tournament and Japan and whoever else. They have players that drop out close to Spring Training. We had that happen.

So next WBC if there's a way for us to get ahead of that and have the roster that is available to us I think would be important.

Q. Which of the players that you've seen now, especially the young players, have surprised you the most, have impressed you the most, and also which of the vets have also earned your respect for the way they've been handling and helping with the young guys?

IAN KINSLER: Yeah, I think Jacob Steinmetz's start was pretty impressive yesterday. You really don't know what to expect from a kid being in that environment against Puerto Rico in Miami with the crowd, with the noise, and he handled himself really well.

Veterans, you know, Ryan Lavarney has been a part of this for a really long time. For him to not really have to get prepared for anything other than four games and to be able to come in here and catch and get beat up and still love it and want to get up this morning and catch and is motivated to do it, I think it showed a lot to everyone on the team. Not just the young guys.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about, you mentioned that you didn't have necessarily all the players that you could have. Are there some benefits of having kind of a more diverse group when it comes to talent?

IAN KINSLER: Diverse?

Q. Yeah, you have some AA players, some All-Star players, and some guys from Israel. Is there some sort of benefit to having a bigger mix?

IAN KINSLER: No, there isn't.

Q. Maybe off the field.

IAN KINSLER: You saw the team we played last night and the previous night. It's Major League All-Star players one through nine, and then they brought in Nelson Cruz, Robinson Cano, and Jean Segura off the bench, and Willy Adames is still sitting over there.

Yeah. Then you see the pitchers they're bringing. As far as diversity, it would be nice to have the best players (laughter).