

World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals - Australia vs Cuba

Wednesday, 15 March, 2023

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

Team Australia

Dave Nilsson

Darryl George

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Question to both. It's about time to play ball and it's a no-cut stage starting, David, what's in your mind right now?

DAVE NILSSON: Very excited and really anxious to see the guys play. I think my group are really hungry for this and I just have a real sense of excitement. I just think the team is ready to play and I just -- I'm just going to sit back and enjoy this game that they are going to put out there.

Q. What's in your mind right now?

DARRYL GEORGE: Just getting ready for this game. It's an important one, just like the three wins we've had. We are going to come in with the same approach. The guys are really excited and we're representing our country and everybody back home. The success we've had has garnered attention and momentum and we have a ton of support back home as well, so we are feeling very confident.

Q. Before the game starts, do you have a specific message or meeting with the players?

DAVE NILSSON: No meeting. The guys know what to do.

Q. So in other words, David, you trusted them pretty well, so the question is, how do you approach the Cuban pitching staff? How do you approach against Cuba?

DARRYL GEORGE: Basically the same way we have approached evident single team we have been competing against. We are going to go out there and have quality, competitive at-bats and look to establish pressure throughout the game and wait for a mistake and when they do make a mistake we capitalize. That's basically been the



way it's gone for us and we are going to keep that going hopefully tonight.

Q. This is a do-or-die situation, winner takes all and this is the knock out stage. Tell us about the game -- about the game.

DAVE NILSSON: Well, the game is very important, obviously. Our previous game was like this as well, so you know, it's something we are used to and we are very comfortable in this environment. It's a big stage which our team wants to be on, and we are looking forward to the game and everyone in our locker room is really in a good frame of mind and ready to play.

Q. What can you tell me about Steven Kent? I know he's been with the team a long time; his importance to the team and the faith you have in him for today's game?

DAVE NILSSON: Yeah, I have a lot of faith in Steve. Obviously I've made him the starting pitcher, so that kind of indicates how I feel about him in this situation. He's one of the older guys on the team and he's been through a lot of the battles with Team Australia. He has the ability to start and pitch out of the bullpen. I just have a level of confidence with him right now. He has the ability to mix pitches up and throw different speeds and also has a good fastball. It's a good matchup starting the game with Steve, and I have real belief he's going to do us very well.

Q. You both have experience in Japan. I know everyone at home has been supportive of you guys but have you received any messages of support from either ex-teammates of yours in Japan, anyone from Team Japan or even just the fans here, I think I saw a small clip with you, Darryl, where a lot of people were cheering for you guys.

DARRYL GEORGE: Yeah, it's been good. Obviously seeing a lot of old teammates and catching up with them, I was speaking with Yamamoto yesterday and he said my baseball bat's not a boomerang, so I should hold onto it next time, so I'll probably take that advice.

They are all stoked. Everyone is stoked for us and very

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happy. I'm getting messages from all over the world. My mom is Fiji, and I'm getting messages from a small village there; and I'm getting messages from Canada and I'm getting messages from the U.S., Japan, everywhere. So everyone is getting behind us and it makes us feel good. The guys are there, and obviously seeing Yamamoto have success in the MPB is very cool, too. It's quite cool to have that journey and go full circle and come back and compete with each other.

DAVE NILSSON: I'm not social media as much as the younger guys, so I don't have as many messages. I've had a lot of old Australian players, a lot of the older group reach out to me and just saying how proud they are of the performance. Yeah, I've had some sparing Japanese people reach out to me which has been really, really neat. Kosuke Fukudome came out and spoke to me the other day just to catch up. I don't know if he was a rookie but he was a young player playing with the Dragons playing shortstop. It's really nice for this experience to have a lot of people that you haven't spoke to in a long period of time and reach out to you and let them know that they are backing us and real proud of us.

Q. What message do you think this has sent to young baseball players back home in Australia?

DAVE NILSSON: I think we give them hope, on the word stage, individually and collectively. Coming from Australia, you're very capable athletes and you're very capable baseball players. If I'm a young kid in Australia, and I have a young kid obviously, there's no barriers for him now. I think that's a big part of what this group is achieving is just knocking down more barriers for the younger players.

DARRYL GEORGE: This tournament has been fantastic for Australian baseball. You know, hearing some of the older boys talk about it, Kenty himself, TK, basically this trip is redefining Australian baseball back home and hopefully it changes the conversation. You know, people don't really expect a lot from us but Dingo has been setting the bar extremely high internally and it's good to see. People should expect something from us because we are a brilliant sporting nation and we are a good by the time. So I just think that we are redefining who we are and we are changing the conversation back hope. So moving forward, hopefully people realize that we belong here and can compete, and we are not here to participate. We are here to win.

Q. You mentioned you spoke with some players like Yamamoto and Kosuke Fukudome. What kind of conversation was it, if you could let us know, please?

DAVE NILSSON: Well, I think we have broken Japanese

and they have broken English, so it's just congratulations and encouragement. As baseball players, as Darryl touched on before, it's a really unique thing to play with players from a different country when you are a bit younger and then you see them on the international stage representing their country. It's a really unique thing. I think we all have a very healthy respect for each other and so the conversation is just more around sharing each other's respect.

DARRYL GEORGE: I speak a little bit more Japanese than Dingo, so Yamamoto and I had some pretty good talks and just general chitchat. Basically I just congratulated him on all the success he had. He is one of the guys that made me feel welcome in Japan, so it's awesome to see him succeed, and obviously there's the new Red Sox slugger from Japan.

And basically we were talking hitting yesterday, and he was giving me some advice. We were just talking about how -- the adjustment you need to make from Japan to American baseball, the stuff that Ohtani did. Just general baseball chitchat and wishing each other well, because I think there is that mutual respect, and I think it is difficult to play overseas. These boys are going to experience it. We as Australian baseball players know what that's like and I wish them well, all the best on their journey.

Q. You've got a base hit against China, but you haven't -- you didn't hit a lot of extra base hits as you used to have. You -- as you're supposed to have. Is there any different approach if you really, really want to do something extra for tonight's game or not?

DAVE NILSSON:

DARRYL GEORGE: My No. 1 tool, I'm just trying to get on base -- I'm kidding.

Dingo put me in an honorable position of hitting fourth for Australian, so obviously with that is going to come a certain respect to from other teams and they are going to pitch me a certain way, so I've done the best I can to make pitchers come to me.

Obviously it's been pretty tough. They have been trying to pitch me pretty tough. Rather than get home runs, I've been more interested in getting on base and letting guys like Perkins, Whitefield, basically one through nine either hit a home run or hit a double for me, because obviously if we are using up their pitch count and they want to pitch around me, I'll just take my bases and I'll just take my singles, and you know, you can score runs with a single upped middle, too.

