

# World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals - Italy vs Japan

Thursday, 16 March, 2023

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

## Team Japan

### Hideki Kuriyama

#### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. What's the atmosphere and how are you feeling right now?**

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: I spoke with my players just a bit but the atmosphere changed a little bit. Regardless of what I said, my players recognize how important today's game is, so all I could do is just trust myself and trust my players. That's it.

**Q. So prior to the conference, what kind of conversation did you have to your players? If you can mention, please.**

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: You know, you know, you know, I'm not supposed to say. I'm sorry about that.

**Q. Today's starting lineups, how do you manage today's lineups?**

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Yes, we watched tons of scouting report. They have great pitchers. When we face against great pitchers, we choose the best lineup among us. The approach is the same as the last four games.

**Q. And the starting pitcher, Shohei Ohtani, this is going to be the knock-down tournament, how do you expect him pitching tonight?**

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Yes. Shohei will pitch in front of the huge audience. But me personally, all I can say is this is a must-win game, nothing but victory, so in order to have that happen, I'm trusting him.

**Q. For Team Japan, your journey goes on but this is the last game playing in Japan in front of a large audience. How do you see that?**

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Well, I'd like to mention that many fans, many of the elder, former players, many fans talking about who is going to be the best and what's the best



lineup, I've watched many people talking about baseball. It was such a joy to me, and to go in that environment, this is part of my role. I wish we could play tomorrow, too, but in order to go forward, my players are playing hard tonight, and please cheer for us.

**Q. A while ago, you just mentioned that the atmosphere is just a bit changed. How about personally yourself? Are you nervous? Are you excited? Tell us about yourself, please.**

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: It's difficult, hard to explain, but including me, when I stepped into this room, yeah, the atmosphere changed. Many, many stories are behind, many, many information, many, many things happen, and I'm not for sure if this is the do-or-die situation, that's why, or there's many small pieces coming around.

But anyway, what I said is, since this is the must-ship game, and it's not me, it's not only today but since I became the manager for the Nippon-Ham Fighters approximately ten years ago, 11 years ago, yeah, today is not the day, the only day.

**Q. Let's talk about the shortstop. He got hurt, and we didn't know exactly the details, but again, he would like to say on the roster. How did you feel and what made you decide to stay with Genda?**

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Yeah, I am not supposed to say any comment as of now. But Genda's spirit, even though he's playing good or not. By watching Genda playing, he can show his spirit to fastball fans. That's what I believe.

**Q. Prior to the game, the rest of the tournament was just announced. How do you see the semifinal and the final?**

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: At this moment, I am not concerned about the future. All I care right now is about tonight's contest, the quarterfinal against Italy. No matter what happened, all I'm concerned with is just tonight's game.

**Q. You have a wealth of starting pitching. You have four starters who are unbelievable. Yoshinobu Yamamoto has two Sawamura Awards and pitched the**



**fourth game. How important is that in a tournament like this, and is there a plan or a system in the Japanese development system that helps you guys create pitchers like this?**

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: I have such an honor as a manager to have such depth for pitchers, not only for our starters but also the second starters for us, they are great. Most of people are capable of pitching at the major league level. That's what I believe.

But me personally when I was a manager at the Nippon-Ham Fighters, having a solid pitcher in the roster is difficult but in Japan, generally speaking, Japanese baseball tended to learn, and the important thing is the fundamental. By.

Learning baseball in Japan, I'd like to show the fundamental importance and also the method of Japanese way, I cannot -- even I cannot explain. Even I don't know why. Sometimes not touching and just letting each kid have their individual stories, and even to me, I also need to study more to explain to you that question.

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