

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - Mexico vs Japan

Sunday, 19 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Japan

Roki Sasaki

Workout Day Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with questions for Roki.

Q. I wanted to ask you, how did you make up your mind for future games?

ROKI SASAKI: The whole team has played very well when we came to the U.S., so I think we want to continue this momentum, and so we're going to bring it. I was hoping I can pitch as well with the team.

Q. I know there's jet lag. How are you feeling? Also, I know you were checking the mound. What's your impression of the new mound? Anything impression about this stadium?

ROKI SASAKI: For the jet lag, I think I slept well on the plane, so I just don't feel much jet lag on this trip. So I think I'm feeling pretty well.

The stadium, I've been here before, so it's about the same. It's a fantastic environment this stadium gives.

And on the mound, it felt a little bit harder than in Japan.

Q. I think you were pitching a little bit lightly, so is it unusual for you to be playing two days in a row? What is your purpose of that?

ROKI SASAKI: Well, I think this was the first stadium that I've never pitched before. Of course the mound is something that I just wanted to get some feel for the actual mound, so...

Q. Ohtani is from Iwate, he's also from Iwate, if you have advice to him, please give it to me. Also, when you look at the pitcher, Ohtani, and if you have any kind of a feeling from him, something you've learned?

ROKI SASAKI: The mound for this stadium, I don't have



much advice that I can give to him. But so far I've seen two games and the curveball and something and how much he puts the power on and so forth. So there's a lot of things that I was able to learn.

Q. Have you looked at the play of the Mexico games, the playback?

ROKI SASAKI: Yes. No, I have not seen it yet on that video, but I did see them play against Puerto Rico. I think it was a very magnificent game. I think they're a very powerful team.

Q. You had said at some point your dream is to one day play in MLB. Do you see that in your mind in 2024? 2025? 2026? And talking to Shohei what has he told you that you think you will learn to help you with the transition?

ROKI SASAKI: Well, I don't know, for the Major League, I think the timing -- rather than the timing, I think I will play in Japan, and then I think something will become clear when I'm going to shift over. What team or what type of environment in the Major League can provide or something like that is what he told me about.

Q. This is the semifinal. How were you told? What did you feel like when you were told you would be pitching?

ROKI SASAKI: Well, officially, it came from Mr. Yoshii. I think it was the semifinal, that's when I was told. Of course I was aware of how important this game was. Of course we had to win today, otherwise we wouldn't have tomorrow. So we just have to do our best to survive.

Q. Coach Kuriyama was talking about how we want Sasaki, your ability, and he wants you to be watched by fans and everybody in the world. What do you think about that?

ROKI SASAKI: Of course, it's rather than being watched, but I want the team to win. That's my hope. So in order for the team to win, I have to make the best performance. I have to show the best performance and hopefully the people will watch me that way.



Q. There's various short-term -- and the team is playing in a very short time, so I think it's a little bit different from your long-term professional career, but what do you think about in this type of environment?

ROKI SASAKI: Oh, I believe, of course, being able to play with the Major League players, I think that's my precious experience. There are many high-level Japanese players that I'm able to play with and it's great. It's something very different from a regular season and that's the feeling I have.

Q. The last time that you played with the Kai as your catcher and the last time you were paired with Nakamura. So we don't know who is going to be your pair, but in the short-term, I think you have different catchers. What kind of things do you have to make in order to pair with the two different catchers?

ROKI SASAKI: Yeah, of course I don't know who is going to be in my pair, but of course, I'm going to have to communicate my feeling that I want to do. That's the first thing that I need to do with him.

Q. Of course it's not the regular season that you have to play a long time, but it's a short time and you have to do the full power. So in this environment, what kind of strategy and what do you have to keep in mind in that kind of environment?

ROKI SASAKI: Well, of course, it's long innings. Also, there are a lot of pitchers behind. So I think that an important part is that I want to keep the game in the zero runs. So rather than just long run innings, I think I want to have a multiple of strikes and that's what I wanted to do with multiple zeros.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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