

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - Mexico vs Japan

Monday, 20 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Japan

Hideki Kuriyama

Pregame Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Who has the first question for Hideki?

Q. You played soccer before being a manager, a baseball coach, and you probably know Mexico more as a soccer power, if that's maybe -- or attempting to be a soccer power. What do you know about the baseball national team of Mexico, and especially what does your young pitcher that's never meet Mexico before, how does he know about how to beat the Mexican team tonight?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: I think we've come this far, so the Mexican team's a power. I've seen some of them play, but seen only part of it. So I'm not really sure what we need to do. But I think what we need to do, we just make sure we do what we're supposed to do. So I think we have to find the opportunity to win.

Q. I believe this will be the game of patience. So have you talked to your players?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: I don't have anything I've talked to the all to players, but I have not really talked to them about that at all. So I know that all the players want to win, so they want to do something. I can feel their feelings. I believe players, so I just have to trust the players. Of course we'll feel pressure, but just play as usual. So if I let them play the way they are used to, I think that the win will come to us.

Q. Is this your first time in the United States?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Yes, this is -- I think I've come to the U.S. over a hundred times, yeah, before I became the head leader, because I came to Major Leagues, and the Minor League, I think I've come here to research.

Q. What are you looking forward to about being able to compete in this environment compared to the Tokyo Dome and seeing what this crowd is like in the United

States?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Of course I have talked about it a little bit yesterday, but I've talked to the Japanese senior members and players who have played in the Major Leagues, and in order for the Japanese baseball world will become close to the Major League world, I think it's -- of course we have jet lag and environmental differences, but I think all the players can understand those differences and I think they will do their best.

Q. When you bring Japanese baseball to the United States is anything short of a final like a failure? Like is the only way that the Japanese team will have a good showing this World Baseball Classic is to make it to the final? Otherwise, is it a failure?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: No, of course I think everybody is trying to expand the fans, layers of baseball fans. So I think it's been very meaningful for us to play, be able to play. If we lose it's not just a team, it's not a team loss, I think it's that I fail to win. But to answer your question, I don't think it will be a failure.

Q. I understand you yourself, I know you have a lot of memories from U.S. baseball. Soon you will be able to be the head coach in the U.S. environment. What kind of feeling do you have in this environment?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Well, I've been coming here many times since the WBC started. But my personal feeling doesn't matter at all. Today I just want to let the players win and we will let them go into the final. So that's all I'm thinking about. But, of course, I've experienced many camps here in the U.S., in person. So I love the United States and in my personal feelings there's nothing more than this to make me happy.

Q. (No microphone.)

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: I won't say it's a zero, but of course this is something that Shohei has not played for five years, but when he was playing for the Fighters. And I've always measured him and how much he can play and when do I have to stop him. It's just the same thing. I just repeated the same thing I've been doing. So I will check with his

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condition, but I would say that there won't be a zero, but basically just the idea is we're not going to push the pitchers that much. So that is my best idea. So does that give you an answer?

Q. Watching from afar as Major League Baseball experiments with a pitch clock and limits on shifts, do you think that's something NPB should consider in the future and will extend to international baseball?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Of course including a pitch clock, the Major League Baseball rules are constantly changing. Of course the Japanese baseball rules are changing as well. So, for example, you mean for the shift? I think for the 18 years I don't think I put the shift on my team at all. So I know there's an advantage, disadvantage of the shifting process, so... but for this, these players, of course they're a quite a bit, many American players are here. I think I know quite a bit of data in hand, but when you think about the Japanese pitchers, I don't know if that's applicable or not. So, but I think in the future, of course, I think the Japanese teams will bring in or adopt all the good part of the American Baseball League rules.

Q. It's been one month and it's just before the semifinals. I can see there's so many top players. What do you think is the maturity of the team with this many players?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: So I think as to the unity of these players is, of course, everybody is playing and as soon as play, the game starts, I think this is way above my expectation. That kind of feeling is something above my expectation.

But when it comes to the maturity of the team, how far we have come as a team. So I think, of course, after today and tomorrow's game everybody's going back to their own team. So I want them to do whatever they want to do. But there are some things that I ask them to continue to do. So I think there's some things that there isn't anything that I am concerned with.

Q. Since you took your job as a coach I think you have a lot of imagination how to play this team. So at this point is there any kind of difference or that you never thought of before? Just tell us about it.

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: So, as I said before, as I said, my personal feeling doesn't matter at all. Of course, I have some feelings, but, however, just talking to the players and how they're feeling. Every player really wants to win. So that's all I wanted to hear. I think that's all I need to hear.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Good luck in tonight's

game.

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