

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - Mexico vs Japan

Monday, 20 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Mexico

Benji Gil

Postgame Press Conference

Japan - 6, Mexico - 5

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started. Who has the first question?

Q. Congrats for the game you played. It's very easy to speak after things happen. If you had to think of something different that you could have done tonight, something to correct, what would you do?

BENJI GIL: To avoid the connections they did in the last inning. But there's no way to avoid that. It's baseball. We have to take off our hats to the Japanese team. Neither team deserved to lose, but someone had to win. Both teams had a great performance, a great pitching from both sides, and at no point in time no team gave up or surrendered, and I think that Japan moves on, but the world of baseball won today.

Q. You said that the world of baseball wins, but how much Mexico wins with the impact you have had in this tournament, not only for these players, but also for the next generations?

BENJI GIL: Those players, this family that we have in the clubhouse now, they gave everything on the field. They played with heart, with soul. They were fighting. They were doing all their best to put the name of Mexico at the highest level. We didn't get the win today, but Mexico is at the highest level today in this sport.

We were one pitch away. The home run they connected, it was a good pitch. The pitch was very good. It was a great connection, a great home run. But we were very close to the victory. So I cannot say I wanted -- I should have done this or that. There is no should have in this case, and I'm very proud of my players, of the staff, the management, that put together the team. And also, I'm proud of the fans for the support they provided to the team and the good vibes of the Mexican fans around the world.



Q. In spite of the result congrats for the great participation of the Mexican team in this tournament. My question is: What lessons have you learned in this World Baseball Classic? And question number two: How do you appreciate the performance of Randy Arozarena on this team?

BENJI GIL: Incredible. Randy was incredible today. He gave us the opportunity to come back to the game after a home run that many teams facing this kind of team with so many stars, they could have given up, but, no, he started this rally. We fought. Again, we took the lead. They are warriors, you know?

And the lessons I've learned was your other question, right? Well, no matter what, tomorrow, if there was another WBC in a month, I would say that Mexico has all the conditions to win a world championship. Three weeks ago not many experts would agree with me, right? But I'm happy to know that we are now considered amongst the best in the world. Unfortunately, we couldn't get the victory today. To be honest with you, if we won today, we could win tomorrow.

Q. Before the game, we were speaking about the fans and the impact of this tournament. After this game, it was a show, like you said, the world of baseball won. You are right. How important was this particular game for the Mexican baseball?

BENJI GIL: Well, I believe that I'm not wrong when I say that baseball -- tomorrow someone will have to win, right, the Team USA or Team Japan, right? In the U.S., I hope that baseball grows. But it's not going to grow that much. We won't see an extreme change. In Japan, the same, baseball is number one.

In Mexico, there will be a radical, extreme change. I don't know whether tomorrow, in one week, in one month, or in one year, but baseball will start growing. It will be the most important game again. These two weeks are going to attract so many young players in Mexico and also Mexicans that live abroad. For that reason, I believe that this was a victory, even when we didn't win today.

Q. How difficult is it to digest the fact that you played very well, but you didn't get the win?

BENJI GIL: It's part of baseball. I feel if we had won the victory, we are not just going to raise the trophy. We were very close to the win today. We lost, but we were not beaten. We were not beaten. They bested us. But for Mexico, it was a victory. It was a victory for the Mexican baseball.

Q. My question goes like this: Mexico is no longer the underdog in the World Baseball. You beat the United States, Puerto Rico, etcetera, and to me, this is the best game that I have seen in this WBC. The relief of Mexico after Kelly left, you faced the obstacles. Do you think that that was the mistake?

BENJI GIL: Well, Cruz didn't have a good control today, unfortunately. But that's part of the sport, that's part of the game. He's a great pitcher. We couldn't be here without Cruz. So I have to applaud each and every player of the team. He played with heart, with soul. He wanted to help the team to Mexico -- to all the Mexicans, but it didn't go well for him today.

Q. Two quick questions: What did you tell the players when you entered the clubhouse after the loss? Will you be able to talk to them?

BENJI GIL: No, not yet. I haven't talked to them yet. But in the dugout, I was talking with some players, and I told them, You have to keep your heads up, you have to feel proud of these couple of weeks. I think that they are not aware of what they have done for Mexico and for the Mexican boys and girls.

I went to the locker room, and I'm sorry that I kept you waiting longer, but it was for me very important for me to come out of the locker room to receive the applause from the fans. We wanted to applaud the fans because they deserved that. We would have loved to give them another victory, but they deserve that we recognize that they supported us a lot and they showed that they are great fans. I don't know if they are the best crowd, the best fans, but we have many, many fans in our country. After this press conference, I will talk to the guys and thank them.

Q. What in your mind makes Randy such a big-game player and things he does with the sombrero in batting practice, the boots, then after the catch, the stare down? What does that do for the group of guys?

BENJI GIL: I mean, he's extremely talented. He's a great character. I think everybody would agree that he is awesome for baseball. He's awesome for baseball, he's

awesome for Cuba, he's awesome for Mexico, he's awesome for wherever baseball's played. Wherever this series was watched, he was awesome for that place. Wherever the game -- you know, it doesn't matter. Korea could have been watching these games and he's a very popular player everywhere around the world.

So it was a pleasure to have him on the team, for him to just do everything that he does, everything that he does, his personality, he's infectious and he's great for the game.

Q. During the game, there was a play, one of the runners arrived safe to the second base and after the review, the umpires decided to change the result. What was the justification they gave for that change and if you were pleased with that decision?

BENJI GIL: To be honest, I didn't ask for an explanation and they didn't give any explanation to me. Someone said that he didn't touch the base, that he was very open, that he was out of the line of the base path. That's impossible because he touched the base. This guy made this comment, but unless they coordinated something to change the decision, there should be a camera tape that tells you for sure without a doubt to change the decision. Maybe they could have used several takes. Maybe from this angle he touched the player or not. I didn't like it. In all the takes that I saw it was not possible to say for sure that it was out. I'm not saying that we lost because of that, okay? Changing the decision was problematic or controversial, you know. So, bottom line, I think that it was a great game, a great match, it was a blessing to be part of this game and of this team.

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