

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - Mexico vs Japan

Monday, 20 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Japan

Hideki Kuriyama

Postgame Press Conference



Japan - 6, Mexico - 5

THE MODERATOR: Who has the first question?

Q. Before, all the players wanted to win and you mentioned that. What do you think about that? Do you agree with that?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Well, from my view, it's not important, but I really think, as I expected, Mexico was a fantastic team and it was a very difficult situation we found. But regardless of who won, we have to do, and I think it was, really, we did it and I think that the people really felt the same way.

Q. First of all, congratulations for this epic game. It's going to be the third time that you will be in the final. So we just want to know if Shohei Ohtani is going to be the pitcher for tomorrow.

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Well, I'm going to have to check his condition, but can you hold off until tomorrow? As I mentioned before this game, I will check and see. It's not a zero chance, but, yeah.

Q. What do you think about the Mexican team? Did you think that you were going to win like Dominican Republic in this World Baseball Classic? What do you think about the Mexican team?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Well, as I mentioned earlier, in Tokyo, we did the Tokyo run and came here and the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela, I think we got to see many teams playing, and every team is a very excellent team. I really don't have any right to say any team, but I really felt every team was an excellent team. If there is a chance, we would love to play against those teams.

Q. Congratulations for moving on to the final, well

deserved. What were you thinking in the dugout when you were facing the bottom of the 9th? How was the mood? What advice did you provide to your players, starting with Ohtani in that inning?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Well, I know the more important the game it is, I think the last players become the more critical, and I always felt that as a coach, I always believed there's always the chance at the end, no matter how the game plays out.

Of course, since I was a coach for the Fighters and I never gave up and that was my belief. So I just felt -- what if I felt, well, maybe I will lose today? And so I've always decided never to feel that way, and I told the players the same thing.

Q. The question about Ohtani pitching tomorrow, you said there's not a zero chance he will pitch or that he will start at pitcher?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: I think we're going to continue with the starting members right now, I think when you think about the intervals, so I don't think there will be too many pitching numbers. But I have to talk to him directly tomorrow. But I think the start member will be the same as today.

Q. We talked the other day, and you mentioned that you wanted your world class players to show that on the world stage. Do you think they did that tonight? And how pleased are you that Munetaka Murakami kind of broke through at the end with the big hit?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Well, so for tonight Sasaki pitcher, Yamamoto pitcher, you know, I think that the same for every country, for WBC, you know. I think that usually the team creates the number of pitching, but in a week or two, because of so many matches we had to play, so I think we can't warm up. So I think the pitchers feel like a 3rd and a 4th inning, I think he can start throwing. But as you can see, those are the two pitchers and I believe you can believe that those two pitchers are great.

Of course Murakami as a pitcher is definitely a great batter. He can hit in the critical point. And I don't know how the

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

people in the U.S. baseball world will view this, but I strongly believe that those players can play.

Q. Could you explain, in your words, what the World Baseball Classic means to Japan, the importance of it.

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Well, I myself for WBC, and there's quite a few players that we have to change the players. The same in Japan. But I myself think that today's game is the same, but like Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Venezuela versus Team USA, and that number of top players are playing in this game. What kind of thing will happen? These games are really critical and the foundation of this baseball. So through the WBC, including the Major Leagues top players can really play in this game. I think it's very meaningful and I was very, very impressed. So I hope we can expand this.

Q. Impressive win. Congratulations. What do you think Murakami believed until the last minute? What do you think? Can you explain in your words?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Well, maybe. I believe he himself is thinking, of course, he hit it. But I know he felt sorry the whole time. He's much better batter than that. I think he just wanted him to prove in the world. So I don't hesitate, I believe in him. But we had to do something in order for him to have a chance to make a hit. So I was able to bring it up, but so I was wondering, he may be a little sad, but...

Q. Do you think that he will connect tomorrow?

HIDEKI KURIYAMA: Of course, I've been telling him, we're going to win through you. You're going to win for us. So I believe in him.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....