

# World Baseball Classic: Final - USA vs Japan

Tuesday, 21 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

## Team USA

## Mark DeRosa

### Pregame Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Who has the first question for Mark?

**Q. The decision to go with Lance on the quarterfinals against Venezuela and then leave Wainwright, that was your call and it worked out. How proud are you about having --**

MARK DEROSA: I'm being totally dead honest with you, I'm not concerned about me being proud about making calls. These have been talked about. I know at the end of the day, Andy Pettitte always says to me, Listen, you're the skipper. We're going to go with what you say. But it is vetted through every coach, and I'm not just sitting in a room by myself coming up with this stuff.

I just felt like Lance bailed us out in pool play, was able to reset our bullpen, the game against Canada. I thought he was throwing great. I liked him working with J.T. I just felt like if we were going down, I was going down that way with him.

Then when I had to tell Waino he wasn't getting the ball, his reaction kind of led me to want to start him against Cuba. Knowing I had Mikolas -- I didn't want Wainwright to piggyback off Mikolas. I wanted -- I felt like Miles could handle that situation coming in, whether it's a clean or dirty inning, a little bit differently than maybe Adam would.

And I just like the way Merrill Kelly carries himself. I don't think this moment's too big for him. I know I've heard a lot of people say he hasn't pitched in a postseason game before. He walks around like it's kind of up to him whether he's going to be good or not. I feel like in that moment, that's exactly the right guy to have temperament-wise out on the mound. And we have Brady Singer, we have Kyle Freeland available. So I've spoken with all of 'em about how they could play a role tonight.

**Q. A lot of people have talked about what is the meaning of this tournament, does it matter. We've**



**asked you this question a bunch of times. Now what does it mean -- what would it mean to win the WBC championship? What does that mean?**

MARK DEROSA: I think for me to represent your country and to come together as a team, I think what it would mean for the guys in that room, man, all I can say is they're fired up to go out and play tonight. I mean, for me personally, when I was given the managerial job, I was so far removed from it, four months removed from getting to this point, that I kind of didn't allow myself to get too deep into it, and then once you're thrust into this, the competitive juices are flowing so hard and teams want it so bad and the passion, it's like you either perform or you get exposed.

I just think there is such a respect of the tournament from the guys in that room, a want to succeed, a want to represent your country. I think it would mean a ton, it would mean a ton to all those guys.

**Q. Sort of along those same lines, a lot of you guys have talked about how it's been like a once in a lifetime experience, you've really enjoyed playing in the tournament. Whereas on the flip side, the Japan team has had such a huge media following and the country is really tuned in. Does the U.S. team kind of feel pressure to win it, do you think, or do you think it's kind of not the same thing?**

MARK DEROSA: No, I'm not feeling that in the room. I think -- yeah, I don't know, I just feel like when you're in it, obviously it's the most important thing to the 30 guys in that room, the coaching staff. I get it from the outside. The parent clubs want to get these guys back to their club getting ready for a season and getting them healthy. I just know that when you're in the fight, it's hard not to be a hundred percent all in on this.

And then I think the pageantry and some of the games we played in, I will say this until I die, that Trea Turner homer against Venezuela will be one of the greatest baseball memories for I think everyone in that room. I just think it brought the team together. Just the fans -- I've played -- I was fortunate, I came up with the Atlanta Braves and played on a lot of great teams and got a chance to go to postseason a million different ways.



That game against Venezuela and the pageantry behind it and the fans and even the game against Cuba -- I know it got out of hand, but the fans, like that is playoff atmosphere plus to me. So I think for a lot of these guys the want to get their teams to the postseason moving forward is going to be even stronger. I know in talking to a lot of these guys, the Mike Trouts and Mookie Betts, Nolan Arenado, after being here and competing in this, like this is kind of where it's at, like, it just is.

**Q. You're managing this team, but you're also baseball fan. Do you want to see Ohtani against Trout tonight?**

MARK DEROSA: No, I'm good if he doesn't pitch. (Laughing.) No. Yeah, I would be interested -- honestly, as a baseball fan, and what Shohei -- obviously, Mike is off the charts, one of the 10 greatest players of all time probably when it's all said and done. Shohei's doing something we've never seen in the entire sport. I'm going to be interested to see, if he does come into the game, kind of the back story of how he was able to get loose because if he's DHing, we've hit in that cage on that home side, there's not much room for him to kind of maneuver in there. So I would be interested to see how they're going to play that out if he has to pitch.

**Q. You talked about the respect of the your group within the team. But there's also all these other teams playing and competing against you, a lot of them from elite Major Leagues around the world. Has it changed your perception at all about the quality of play around the world?**

MARK DEROSA: That's a good question. Yeah, I definitely think that obviously a lot of countries are getting better at the game of baseball. I thought Colombia, man, the arms they were running out there. They weren't name guys, but everyone was sitting 92 to 95 and had pretty decent stuff. I kind of knew playing winter ball throughout my career, I knew the pageantry and the passion behind Venezuela, obviously, the Dominican. These guys are proud. These guys are teammates of a lot of these guys and we understand how much this means.

I just have seen a snowball effect with the guys coming together as a team. They were just saying it, they were just talking about, tomorrow they will be on planes back to Clearwater and wherever they go, West Palm, Jupiter, Arizona, and it's going to be such a letdown for about 48 hours for 'em, right, because you're thrust into postseason baseball and then all of a sudden it's like, all right, I got to get ready for four at-bats on a B field in Spring Training. It's just going to be tough for them to get up for those things.

**Q. Having done this now for a few weeks, are you intrigued enough to throw your hat in the ring when one of the 30 opens up?**

MARK DEROSA: I mean, I've enjoyed every second of it and if that opportunity presents itself, I'll certainly exhaust it and take a look at it. But I didn't do this for that to happen. I'm certainly not thinking about it right now. I just want to do right by the 30 guys in there and my coaches. We have worked hard to get them to relax and play as a team and come together and have fun and gel and it's happened. That's what I'm proud of.

These guys are having fun being around each other. They're not trying to impress each other. I think that's the biggest thing, right? I always said this, I never saw Derek Jeter make an out until I played with him in the WBC, because all I saw was highlights every night, and he -- all I saw was his good stuff. I'm like, oh, this guy strikes out too? And I think at times when you're around these guys you're trying to impress each other instead of going out and winning a ballgame, and that has kind of gone out the window and they're really enjoying competing with each other and passing the baton. That's been nice for me.

**Q. I wonder, considering Bryce Harper was one of the first players to commit to this and you know him well, you played with him, I wonder if you've heard from him over the last couple weeks?**

MARK DEROSA: I haven't, and shame on me. I was talking to J.T. and Trea and Schwarbs. We should have had him come down here. I should have reached out to him and had him come walking through the clubhouse. He would have been all over this thing.

So, yeah, certainly, I'm -- that one hurt. I kind of figured he was going to have surgery when it was going down. I'm like, there's probably no way he's playing with us. But having him as a teammate at 19 years old and then kind of just talking to him and picking his brain throughout the course of his career and seeing what he's become has been awesome. I would have loved to have had him be a part of this.

**Q. How have you seen the personality and identity of this team evolve since the start of the tournament?**

MARK DEROSA: Yeah, I just think for me it's the smiles underneath with the work. They have become teammates instead of acquaintances, talking to each other, picking the brains of each other on what they're trying to accomplish, both pitcher and hitter, watching them get more comfortable with the coaches. I personally think -- I can't

rave enough about my coaches. It's hard for a pitcher not to want to pick Andy Pettitte's brain. He's pitched in eight World Series. It's hard for a hitter -- I've watched Paul Goldschmidt and Michael Young like form this bond. The respect of each player, like, it's hard not to want to pick Mike Young's and Ken Griffey, Junior's brain on hitting. These guys have been some of the best to do it.

Brian McCann with Will Smith and Higashioka and Realmuto. Brian's a seven-time All Star, a six-time, seven-time Silver Slugger, won a World Series. I mean, these guys have massive respect for the coaches in that room. So that's been the joy of this thing. Obviously, winning, and winning tonight would be huge, but to watch these guys kind of relax and use the resources we've provided them and become a team has been huge.

**Q. I'm from Venezuela. How do you manage during the tournament some restrictions of the organizations, especially with the change of that order in the rotation because some managers of other teams say that they couldn't do that, and maybe that's an issue of this tournament and you could do that.**

MARK DEROSA: That's a huge issue.

**Q. Some organizations said that this pitcher has to pitch this day and has to start, has to --**

MARK DEROSA: Oh, yeah, you know, just an example on that, that's why Nick Martinez isn't with us anymore. I feel terrible about that, because Nick wanted to stay. But I also understand that in order for him to break camp with the Padres, he had to get his innings in, and I couldn't guarantee him that.

That has been the biggest thing. But I promised myself and Andy, and Andy agreed that we were going to not deviate from that. So every day we sit up -- last night, we were focused on Mexico, the way the game was going, and boom, it was Japan and it was quick. And then we sat up until 2:30, 3 in the morning trying to piece together, all right, who is available. The biggest problem I feel like I've had is the ability to -- the minute I get someone up, they got to come in the game. There's no, hey, sit back down, and I might get you hot again later in the game, which is what happens during the regular season.

So that's been the toughest rub. It's like, because then you get asked, oh, were you late on this? Well, if I get a guy up after two hitters, he's got to come in. What if a guy gets out of it? Then I lose him for the rest of the game? I don't want to do that. So that's been the biggest adjustment.

And it's funny, as this thing has progressed, the players are

saying, well, don't honor that. But you kind of made that decision already to honor that and it's worked out. I trust every guy in there, so it will be fine.

**Q. Were you kind of surprised that Imanaga is starting tonight instead of Darvish? And did you guys have enough time to prepare for him?**

MARK DEROSA: Yes. Yes, I was surprised. Yu was on full rest. The familiarity with a bunch of guys that we have in our lineup, I thought he was the guy that was going. We were a little surprised. We watched a ton of video on the guy who is starting tonight and he's got his hands full with our lineup. It's crazy deep and crazy good.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Mark. Thanks so much. Good luck tonight. Appreciate it.

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