

World Baseball Classic: Final - USA vs Japan

Tuesday, 21 March, 2023

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Japan

Shohei Ohtani

Postgame Press Conference

Japan - 3, United States - 2

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll go ahead and get started. Who has the first question?

Q. When did you realize you were going to face Mike Trout and what was going through your mind when he stood up at the plate?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Well, of course when we are making it, and I thought that he may be coming around, so of course in the first, when the second batter and we didn't have any runners, so I thought -- I was hoping there wouldn't be anybody, and so of course, the first batter went on to the base, so I was a little bit disappointed.

Q. You're the MVP and you are champions. Congratulations. I heard Darvish has said something three years later and you asked him to do that. Do you think you want to be in this WBC in three years later?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Yes, I would love to. Of course I want to maintain the certain levels. Of course that was one of the requirements, but I would love to enter again.

Q. What went into the sequence of slider, four fastballs, slider? And going down the road, do you or Mike, is there anyone owing each other dinner or anything for this?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Of course I have -- I had some certain type of a plan, but of course, I think the target ball is depending upon the batter. So of course, hey, you just have to trust your sense, though.

Q. Of course you mentioned that you want to be the best player in the world. This championship, I don't know what it means to you as a baseball player? Can you describe?



SHOHEI OHTANI: Of course I believe this is the best moment in my life and just because we won today, though. Of course this doesn't mean that we achieved a final goal, but this is just a passing point. Our team has just started, so I think we need to tune-up for the future.

Q. Everyone's seen the footage of your speech before the game, talking about not needing to admire them in order to beat them. What did you want to get across to your teammates with that speech?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Of course when we didn't really play the games, but the American baseball, that we wanted to respect of course American baseball, so we do. So just looking at the great lineup of the great players that makes us feel like -- how do I say that? I mean, obviously, we have respect, but at the same time, it looks like we might be beaten down. So just forget about those kind of feelings. We're just even. We have to just beat 'em. And that's the kind of thing, I just wanted to bring that feeling up amongst us.

Q. When you were in high school, I know the WBC was your goal to be MVP when you were in high school? Can you just tell us what you were feeling at the time and how do you feel today?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Well, as I said earlier, in my baseball life, one of the things that I want to achieve and of course today I was able to achieve one of the goals. Of course, I happened to be able to get the MVP, but this really proves that Japanese baseball can beat any team in the world. So it was a very short time, but I really enjoyed playing with the teammates.

Q. After the championship was decided, I wasn't sure I know from your expression I couldn't tell if it was tears or sweat, but I don't know, how did you feel?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Yes, definitely it was the sweat.

Q. In the 8th inning in the bullpen, you sit down, and I believe you were coming out. So how do you feel? What were you thinking about it? What were you thinking, your pulse and so forth?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Next inning the batters that I have to pitch, and of course it's the 9th and it's 1-2 and of course two outs, no runners, and Trout would be the best scenario is what I was thinking. So of course at 3-2 and, unfortunately, I have to run -- I had to walk the batter, but it was a little bit off the schedule of my plan, but it was okay.

Q. When you started playing baseball, what do you think -- what did you do to become a No. 1 in the world, if you could tell us?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Well, it's not myself, but from the first WBC and many of my senior members have played great games. That's why we are able to play like them. So I think that they were the contribution to our success, and I think the younger people will follow us and that will be great.

Q. What do you think about the job that your pitching staff as a whole did throughout the tournament? And especially tonight against that lineup, what made you guys so tough, I mean the rest of the staff?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Are you asking my performance or the pitching staff?

Q. The pitching staff as a whole all during the tournament.

SHOHEI OHTANI: Yes, I think many great pitchers that represent Japan came here and many starting pitchers started pitching in the middle of the innings. So I think that all the pitchers, they were able to do their best, and I really appreciate their effort.

Q. Japan became only the second team in WBC history to go undefeated. What is your message to the next generation of Japanese players looking up to you and hoping to be in your position one day?

SHOHEI OHTANI: I'm sorry, would you repeat the question again?

Q. Japan became only the second team to be undefeated in WBC history. In your position as a great voice for Japanese baseball, what is your message to the next generation of players looking up to you hoping to be in the same position as you one day?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Of course we were lucky that Japan was able to capture the championship. I think any country could have captured the championship. I watched some of the other countries' performance too and it was very well representative of the baseball world.

Q. I know you were talking about this one is just a passing point. What would be your next goal after this WBC?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Well, of course the new season will begin, so that will be the first one. Of course I'm going to have to start winning and that will be the next step. Of course next experience, I think it's the next three years later, so of course I'm going to have to keep the same level and hopefully I'll be a better player. I'll do my best.

Q. What is the significance to you of Japan winning its third WBC championship, and what does it mean to you to be part of that?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Of course to me, as I said earlier, I've seen Japan winning and I just wanted to be part of it. I really appreciate that I was able to have the great experience. As I say, the next generation, the kids who are playing baseball, I was hoping that those people would like to play baseball. That would make me happy.

Q. We have seen you start as a pitcher and be a hitter in the lineup, but we haven't seen you as a guy out of the bullpen as much or in relief. What was the biggest difference for you having to go back and forth between the bullpen and the dugout and getting ready to hit and what was going through your mind as you were trying to adjust to a different circumstance there?

SHOHEI OHTANI: When I was in Japan, of course I didn't run to the bullpen, but I do have the experience doing that. So to go from the dugout and the bullpen and back and forth is not difficult for me. So I was able to have a precious experience and I appreciate that too.

Q. The WBC does not only inspire Japan, but also Korea, Taiwan, and China. What do you want to tell all those baseball players in those countries?

SHOHEI OHTANI: As I say, I think any country could have gotten the championship and I know there was some games that had quite a bit of the points, but I don't think that was representative of the difference. Taiwan and China, Korea, and I think all the countries' abilities are getting closer and closer. So any country can get the championship.

Q. Kuriyama, he is your teacher, but that was his dream that came true. What do you think about it?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Of course Japan in 2016 won, so I wasn't really thinking of this will be the case. So I really appreciate it and we ended up in the best ending. It was a very precious experience for me too.

Q. You walked to the mound very slowly before you pitched. Why?

SHOHEI OHTANI: Of course that was a replay. That was the reason why I was able to go up, walk up on the mound. So that was a good thing for me to be able to walk up on the mound really slowly.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you on behalf of all of us. It was a pleasure to watch you and congratulations to Samurai Japan. Congratulations.

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