

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - USA vs Dominican Republic

Sunday, 15 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Dominican Republic

Juan Soto

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Obviously the whole WBC has been electric. Some won't admit it, but some will. Why is the WBC bigger to some over the World Series, the excitement level and whatnot?

JUAN SOTO: From my point of view, the way you see this, you have a whole country behind you. You have a whole country cheering for you. You have a country that saw you grow and become who you are these days. So you cannot be more proud to give them back a little bit of what they've been giving you all these years.

So I think it's the way everybody feels playing in the WBC. They just play for their country, they play for their families that support them right there every day. So I think that's what makes it special.

Q. Juan, the DR has enjoyed this tournament. You can see the brotherhood in the clubhouse, in the locker room. How did you prepare for this game today? You are going to face the best pitcher of the Majors. How not to be overconfident and believing in yourself for this game?

JUAN SOTO: With the trust that we have as a team, no matter the rival, we are going to give our best. We believe in our talent, in our pitchers. We have a great team, so we are not afraid. We just have to go out and play and win the baseball game.

We are going to face the U.S. in just the way we have been playing against very good teams. We have to play our baseball no matter who the rival is. We have to execute and play baseball the right way and try to win.

Q. Juan, you have faced Paul Skenes, one of the best pitchers today. Why is he so difficult? You, as one of the best hitters in the Majors, why is he so difficult?



JUAN SOTO: He's very good because of the way he attacks the hitters. He's very smart. He likes playing with the mind of the hitters. We have to think a lot when we face him. That's why I think he's so special.

Q. Two questions. The whole country is very proud of you, but no matter the outcome of the game, what's your message? What's your message for the country after receiving the support that you have received? And considering what you just said about today's pitcher, he is the best pitcher that you are going to face in this Classic. As the first bat and being elite and smart, even as smart as him, what are you going to do?

JUAN SOTO: First of all, thank the Dominican Republic for the support. We have felt the energy, that support from day one, not only here but in the DR. We watched the videos, people cheering for us, rooting for us. There are no words to describe that. That's very special, and we thank the Dominican Republic for supporting us through the good times, the bad times.

Regarding Paul Skenes, well, I try to chase the pitch and execute. We try to take advantage of the failures or mistakes that he makes. If he makes a mistake, we cannot fail. I'm waiting for a failure and try to hurt him when I can.

Q. Juan, you have been a champion. You have been resisting pressure, and you have you moments that make the difference. This game makes the difference as well. How did you prepare mentally for this game against the U.S. in this knockout phase?

JUAN SOTO: Just like I said, doing what we have been doing from day one. The mindset is the same, try to attack, attack early and in a very consistent way from the very beginning to make pressure to win the games. And we have been doing that throughout the tournament, scoring runs early, attacking the starters early. This is a good way to get the victory.

Q. Juan, one of the things that a lot of fans have been noticing is how much fun everyone is having, the amount of fun everyone is having on the field. How are you able to keep loose on the field, especially



during the game, and bring a lot of that joy and your culture to a place where everyone can see it?

JUAN SOTO: I feel like to keep everybody loose in that dugout, this is the way -- you've just got to look around. That's the way you keep everybody loose. When you look around and you see what we've got in the dugout and what amount of talent we have, let's keep it very loose.

We all know what we can do. We all know how dangerous this lineup is, so that's what keeps us loose.

And we trust each other. We feel the same. We feel like family, friends, so we all cheer for each other. I think that's the way we're having fun out here. We really enjoy every pitch, every swing we take, every play we make. Everybody's just having fun with it. So I think it's the way to keep it loose, too.

Q. For a game like today, I would like you to speak in Spanish about what you said, how you feel, relaxed, et cetera. You haven't been very successful against this pitcher. Did you talk to Julio, who has been more successful against Skenes?

JUAN SOTO: We have our plan. We are going to attack as a team. The past is in the past, and we are focused on today, on we can do it today, and we'll try to execute.

We have some experiences with Skenes, that pitcher. We are helping each other communicating, and we'll try to achieve our goal. It's not going to be easy because he's a great pitcher, but we trust our lineup.

It won't be easy for him as well. From top to bottom, we have great hitters who are going to be focused on the strike zone and attacking the pitches that he misses. We are nine against one. It is not easy for them.

Q. Where would you put this game against the U.S. during your career? And the second question, you are a great friend of Aaron Judge and now you are facing him today. How do you feel about it after living together at the Yankees?

JUAN SOTO: Well, first of all, we have to play the game and then I'll tell you where I am going to put this game in my career. But we trust our team.

Aaron is a great person, great friend, and he was a great teammate. We keep in touch. We chat. But when we are on the field, it's a different thing. He is wearing U.S. on his shirt and I am wearing the Dominican Republic. I'll do my best to win the game and he'll do the same.

On the field, it's a different story. He's with his team and I'm with my team, and let's go for it.

Q. Could you describe for those kids that are watching you and the DR or those that came to this stadium to see you play what is it like to be on the field? Because after the last out against Venezuela, the stadium was shaking. The same with Korea. I mean, there is such a feeling, such an emotion because of the vibes that you transmit. And on the other hand, what does it represent to you to be around legends such as Nelson Cruz, David Ortiz, Pedro Martinez, Juan Marichal supporting you, being with you in this Classic?

JUAN SOTO: The emotions on the field are unprecedented. You cannot compare that with anything. Wearing your country's uniform, it's very difficult to describe that in words. So many emotions, adrenaline that you feel in your body. I mean, I cannot describe, but I love to be part of this process.

And the kids out there that are dreaming about this, this could be the most beautiful thing in their careers.

And your second question about legends in the dugout? Oh, this is huge. This is beautiful. We have a helping hand that we can use at any point in time, people that are very experienced in World Series and World Classics, talented people such as Pujols.

I mean, many things that we have in our favor that we can use not only for this World Classic, but throughout our career. People such as Fernando Tatis Sr. that come to you and speak with you about their experience in the Majors.

I mean, a great thing, a beautiful thing that you take away from this Classic, not only the emotions, but being part of the team and having the chance or opportunity to talk to these people, this is very useful in our careers.

Q. Albert talked a few minutes ago about your leadership qualities and just how you lead. Can you talk about what you've learned from him as a leader as he's coached you, and then also what you enjoy most about being able to be a leader for the guys in the clubhouse?

JUAN SOTO: For me, I never feel like I'm one of the leaders. I just feel one and the same in that clubhouse. We all feel together, we all feel like family.

Definitely, when we're in there, I try to make sure that everybody feels equal. There's nothing too high, nothing too low. We're all the same. We all have a voice in there,

and we all want to have fun. That's the mindset.

With Albert, just a great leader, a guy who's going to be communicating with you, letting you know what he has in mind and what he's going to do. It's really cool to see that. A manager always wants to see what the players think and what is going to be the best for the team. I think it's really cool how he's handled this whole tournament.

Q. Does this experience make you better as a player, only because you get to talk and play the game with guys you're usually playing against? Now that you're teammates, a lot of great players, and a lot of Dominican Republic players around the team now that you get to talk hitting with or that sort of thing, and just the way you're playing the game, maybe a different style, in kind of a fun way. Does all that make you a better player moving forward?

JUAN SOTO: I would say yes, I would say yes because the way we play the game here, all the time you play at 100 percent all the time, every time. You've got to give it everything.

Definitely, we give our 100 percent in the Big Leagues too, but it's just a different way, a different feeling, a different energy that runs through your veins.

But definitely make you better the way you come here to play. It's just a playoff game every game. So I feel like that helps you in some kind of way.

But the biggest way it helps us is when you get to see our clubhouse and how many Hall of Famers you have in there, how many different guys you have to reach out and talk to and learn things from them. That's what you take the most to help your game.

So for your question if it makes me better, yes, 100 percent it makes me better.

Q. Two questions. Today you are going to remove the tea bottle? Are you okay with that today? That's a joke. A couple of years ago the country was in the same situation. Thirteen years ago you were like 13 or 14. At that point in time, seeing Nelson Cruz, Cano, did you ever imagine that you could be in the same situation that now you, as an adult, can entrust the same feeling to the new generation?

JUAN SOTO: That has always been my dream, to make it to a World Classic, especially now when we are two games away of being champions. I was a fan in 2013. I was there supporting the teams, watching the games. It was difficult for me watching the game, but we could, and we were part

of that process.

I was with my dad. We always spoke about that in the family; if I ever had a chance to be there, that would be great. Now I'm here, and I have to be grateful to God for this opportunity from day one.

So to me, yes, it's been always a dream for me to be part of this national team and to try to win a World Classic for the DR.

(FastScripts by ASAP Sports)