

World Baseball Classic: Semifinals - USA vs Dominican Republic

Sunday, 15 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team USA

Aaron Judge

Bobby Witt, Jr.

Bryce Harper

Pregame Press Conference

Q. We talked to DeRosa from the DR. In this game today, there are future Hall of Famers. Your impressions about the game today? It may be the highest level game in the history of the game. Thank you. The question is for the three of you.

BRYCE HARPER: I think obviously, like you said, it's a lot of great talent on both sides. It should be a lot of fun. The crowd should be really good. I think we're all looking forward to it.

Obviously two of the best teams in this tournament are going at it head to head, so I think it should be a lot of fun.

BOBBY WITT JR.: Yeah, like he said, a lot of fun. A lot of talent on the field tonight, so we're going to enjoy it for sure, so just make the most of it and have fun.

AARON JUDGE: This is what you dream about as a kid, playing with the best of the best. We've got the best squad out there. They've got the best squad out there. It's what you play when you're in your backyard playing Wiffle Ball, it's moments like this you dream about. So we're excited to get out there and excited to get this thing started tonight.

Q. Aaron, we all know the electricity the Dominican Republic's been bringing throughout this whole tournament, but I think they forget that USA plays with a lot of pride, too. Tell us about the pride that we're playing for across our chest just as much as they are going into this game.

AARON JUDGE: Everybody plays this game differently, everybody enjoys this game differently. Getting a chance to represent the USA the past couple weeks has been just



an amazing honor. I just go back and think about a lot of the people that made sacrifices for us to come up there and play a kids' game and enjoy in this moment.

All tournament you've seen all three of us up here, we're screaming and yelling and celebrating each other, celebrating the game.

Like I said, we're going to feed into the atmosphere and enjoy the atmosphere. This is what it's made of tonight, so we're going to have some fun out there.

Q. With your team being so heavily favored coming into this tournament, is kind of the so-called villain role something that you've tried to lean into a little bit behind the scenes, or are you not thinking about it that way?

BRYCE HARPER: I don't know about a villain role. I don't think any of us really thought about that.

It's funny to think about the American way of baseball and the Dominican way of baseball and all this kind of stuff, but it's awesome to see all these cultures come together from Asia to Latin countries to America. That's what's so great about our game.

Japan plays a certain game. America plays a certain game. Latin American countries play a certain game. We're all in this tournament feeding off of playing a great game, and that's what makes our game so great is there's so many different cultures that play this game.

I can't dance a lick like Tatis can, but I have fun playing this game.

So I think it's such a storyline for all you guys compared to us. We're just going out there and enjoying the game that we play, and that's kind of how we feel.

Q. How do you feel about possibly being visiting team in Miami? Because the crowd in Dominican Republic has been rumbling the stadium through the face groups, and also the crowd in Venezuela could be very large in a possible final.



BRYCE HARPER: Bobby, you take this because it's probably going to feel like Kansas City tonight.

BOBBY WITT JR.: Yeah, I feel like pressure is a privilege. It's been an honor to be in this situation. We felt like the visiting team playing Mexico the other day.

This is what we thrive off of. These guys have been in huge games. We've been in a couple of bit games, so it's going to be amazing. I think it brings out our talents even more. It brings out just who we are as people. It's the same game we've played since we were 5 years old, we're just at a little bigger stage now. We're just the road dogs and we're going to have a lot of fun.

Q. First to Aaron, I know being the captain of such a great team as the Yankees takes a lot of responsibility, and now being a captain of a whole country, what does that mean for you? Because your manager said that you're like the definition of a captain. What does that mean to you, and what do you take from this experience as a player and as a leader?

And for you guys, what does it mean to have him as a captain?

AARON JUDGE: Yes, it's been incredible being the captain for Team USA, something I don't take lightly. When DeRo called me and wanted me to be on the team, I said, man, this is just an honor getting to put on this uniform with everybody.

As captain, my job's simple, especially with this group. It's just try to get the best out of every single individual in this room. If we're all playing at the top of our game, we're all comfortable, we're doing our thing, good things are going to happen and we're going to bring home the gold.

So that's always been my mindset is to just motivate the guys around me, try to challenge the guys around me and just bring the best out of them. That's what it's all about, it's about a team unit. Not one guy is going to win this game for us tonight and the next couple nights. It's about all of us pulling on the same rope. And if you've got everybody in that clubhouse doing the same thing, good things are going to happen.

Q. Question for the three of you. Dominican Republic has been a team in the first round that was probably unstoppable. What do you think is the key to beating this team that scores a lot of runs in the first five games?

And the second question would be, I know you are focused on this game, but if you saw Venezuela and Japan, the

game last night, what are your thoughts about it? Thank you.

BRYCE HARPER: Yeah. I think going back to her question real quick, Judgey's been great, man. Just a lead -- you good? You've got it?

He's been great, though, just to let you guys know. It's been awesome and just a privilege to play with him. I mean, he's one of my favorite guys, so it's been a lot of fun.

I can't really remember what she said, so go ahead. I was just thinking about that.

BOBBY WITT JR.: Yeah. Talking about that game last night was electric, and tonight is going to be electric. I forgot about the first --

BRYCE HARPER: Oh. Paul Skenes is going to be the stopper.

BOBBY WITT JR.: Yeah. If we play our game, I feel like we can beat any team in the world. With the talent we have, the players we have, the pitches we have, the coaches we have, it's one of one, the team we have. That's all we have to do. The first thing is we be ourselves, if we just go out there and be ourselves out there and enjoy it.

Q. Bryce and Aaron, obviously as you go to sleep last night, as you wake up this morning -- I know this tournament has only been a week and a half, but how much are you in the late October mode, sense of anxiety, the excitement, all those things?

AARON JUDGE: It's been fun. I'm sitting there doing dry swings in my hotel room, having my wife videotape it. It's just -- you feel like a kid again. You feel like the kid laying out your jersey before you go to your first All-Star Game or something like that. It's just been a special moment.

I think the coolest things has been just being a part of this team. Every single guy in this room has been the best at their craft. Just seeing how much they want to win, how much they check their egos at the door. It doesn't matter if they're MVPs, Cy Young winners, All-Stars. Each guy checked their ego at the door and stepped in here and threw on the USA, and they're representing their country the right way. So it's been an absolute blast. Just having the playoff atmosphere in March, it definitely gets you geared up for the season real quick.

So I've been enjoying this moment, enjoying it especially with these two guys leading the way. It's been a lot of fun.

Q. The question is for you, Aaron. Baseball is growing so much, statistics are showing. Tonight this might be one of the greatest or maybe the greatest game ever played in WBC. What do you think this means for baseball, for the growth of this game, that you are one of the faces of it?

AARON JUDGE: I think the amazing thing this year with the WBC is just each country is getting represented by the best of the best. I think that's the coolest thing, is little kids all around the world are getting the chance to turn on the TV and watch their favorite players represent their country, represent it with pride. And I think it's just going to continue to grow the game.

You get all the best to come out here and represent this tournament. It's only going to mean more success, more guys showing up for the next couple years. We've got the Olympics coming up. We've got WBC coming up, the season coming up. That's what it's all about, growing the game, growing the game for the next generation and doing it the right way.

So I'm excited for tonight. We'll see what happens.

Q. Question for any and all of you guys. Roman Anthony is by far the youngest guy on the team among hitters, by far the least experienced. In the two weeks you all have spent together, how has he fit in with all of these superstars, MVPs, et cetera, as the newbie?

BOBBY WITT JR.: He's got so much aura, it's incredible.

BRYCE HARPER: No. It's been fun. He's a stud. He's so much fun to watch play. Him and Bobby are going to lead the way for this team for a long time. Gunnar Henderson, the same thing.

This game is in such a great place with young guys, with so many guys that love the game of baseball. He plays in such a big-market team in Boston. So to be able to have the success in his career this early, it's been a lot of fun to watch.

I can't say enough about him. He works hard, does everything the right way. He's been a pro. It's been a lot of fun to watch and play with him.

AARON JUDGE: It's been cool. Me and Harper have been kind of joking around that Bobby and Roman are going to be on this, representing the USA for the next 10, 15 years. Hopefully when we're the old guys in here in a couple years, they still want us on the team.

Roman's a class act. Just to be 21 years old and to be doing what he's doing on the biggest stage in baseball every single night. We see him in the cage. He's watching Bryce. He's asking questions. He's watching Bobby. I think that's such a cool thing to see, at such a young age to ask questions, to be observant like that, and just trying to get better. So the Red Sox definitely have a good one in him.

Q. Sorry, Aaron. I have to follow up here. Why were you doing dry swings in your hotel room? Is that something that you do often, or is that just a product of the excitement for tonight?

AARON JUDGE: I think you can ask these two the same question. They're probably doing the same thing.

BRYCE HARPER: You don't talk in the microphone in front of the mirror before you come? I mean, come on, man. Jeez.

Hey, Aaron. You don't practice that?

AARON JUDGE: No. It's just a thing. I'm so excited for this game. You want to go out there and perform your best. You want to be at the top of your game. So even during the season, even during the regular season, I've got so many videos on my phone of just -- you feel something in the middle of the night, and you want to feel it out so you're ready for the next day.

You can ask these two guys the same thing. Baseball is on our mind 24/7. How can we win this game tonight? How can we win this game coming up? So anything I can do to just put myself in the best position to help this team win, I'm going to do it. So if it's dry swings at 2:00 o'clock in the morning, it's going to be part of it.

(FastScripts by ASAP Sports)