

World Baseball Classic: Pool A

Thursday, 5 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

Team Canada

Ernie Whitt

Tyler O'Neill

Mike Soroka

Josh Naylor

Workout Day Press Conference



MIKE SOROKA: I think everybody always sees Canada as hockey. I think what the Blue Jays do, when they make runs, like they did last year, they kind of light a fire in Canadian baseball, and I think a lot of us are looking to continue that and show kids in Canada where it comes from.

I think all of us got to spend a lot of time on the junior team and get to know the whole process and the team dynamics. Again, I've watched the last, I don't know how many WBCs, and it's truly an honor to be here playing for this country and a manager like Ernie.

JOSH NAYLOR: Personally growing up and playing baseball and hockey, I gravitated towards baseball first, me and my brothers. We got a lot of opportunities with the national team to wear "Canada" across your chest. It's a very humbling experience. It's a super fun time. You get to meet friends like these and stick with them throughout your career.

You always keep up with guys with those you played with because it's such a small-knit group. We take a lot of pride wearing this "Canada" across our chest. We love being able to represent the country in tournaments like these and play our hearts out and inspire the youth later on.

Q. How does Matt Wilkinson fit the pitching puzzle? Could he go longer than two?

ERNIE WHITT: We haven't decided that yet. He definitely fits into the plan. All of the pitchers fit into the plan. It's determining where they're going to slide, but they're all puzzle pieces.

Q. Ernie, how does it feel to play on day 2 as opposed to the first day? Do you think that's better? You get a little more rest? You get to scout some of the other teams? How does that feel for you guys?

ERNIE WHITT: I think our schedule is great. We have the off day on the first day. We got in late last night and early this morning. Gives us a full day and a half just to kind of relax. We'll have a practice tomorrow, fine tune some things, and be ready to go for the second day on the 7th.

Yes, we're going to be watching the games on the 6th and scouting them, but hopefully we'll have an idea. I think our schedule is outstanding.

Q. I already spoke to the coach about this theme, but to the players, Canada's baseball structure and U.S. players growing, that structure, how was it growing up in a country where obviously hockey, basketball, lacrosse is big over there?

TYLER O'NEILL: I'll answer that. I take a lot of pride in playing for baseball Canada. It's really a dream to represent our country on an international stage. We're grinders, man. We play in the winter. We play in bad weather a lot. We know how to grind it out. All of us want to be here, and we're all ready to compete for our country.

Q. Josh, how cool is it to play with your brother for your country? What's that been like sharing the field with him and sharing the field this week?

JOSH NAYLOR: It's cool. I got to do it in Cleveland for a little bit with him, and it's a blessing, see his growth, see his maturity, watch him just develop as a player and others a human on and off the field.

I love these moments, and I'm very, very humbled and grateful for these opportunities that I get to spend with him and see his game kind of evolve slowly year after year and the progress he gets to make as a player and as a human. Very, very blessed.

Q. For the first time, do you think this is an opportunity, real opportunity for Team Canada going



to the next round because in the previous editions of the World Baseball Classic, Team Canada has never advanced to the second round. Do you think this is the opportunity going with the reality that this is a new group for you guys?

ERNIE WHITT: I'll answer that since I've been there since the inception. Every time we take the field, we expect to win. Has there been disappointments? Absolutely. But we're very confident in this team we have put together. They've come together as a team. We are a family, and we know every game is going to be difficult. We can't take anyone for granted. That's why we play the game.

Hopefully we'll -- I know we will -- play the game very aggressively and with a lot of passion and pride. So hopefully we will move on to the next round this time.

JOSH NAYLOR: To piggy-back on that, I think we don't come into the game expecting to lose or expecting not to advance. We come into the game ready to win and ready to play hard for nine innings or X amount of innings we play that day.

We have a very, very skilled roster, very great players, two next to me right here. I think we expect to win every single day and expect to be in the next round and then the next round after that. We play hard until the last out every day.

Q. Mike, just after everything you've been through, what does it feel like for you to be here? Just in a limited sample over the past couple days, what do you appreciate about being with guys like Tyler O'Neill and Josh Naylor?

MIKE SOROKA: I think I've had to say no a couple of times, unfortunately, due to injuries. It's the first time in my career where everything has kind of lined up and I've been able to put on this jersey again. They said it before, it's always an honor, and something that you kind of look at when you're a kid as an incredible opportunity.

Getting to see these two guys on the field in the same spot has been awesome too. Like you said, there's so much talent. I think every time we see this lineup come together, it just gets better and better and deeper and deeper. To see these guys in the middle of it is a good feeling.

Q. Have you scouted Team Colombia? How do you feel going against them on Saturday?

MIKE SOROKA: Yeah, there's quite a few guys that obviously we've come across. Julio Teheran was one of the veterans when I came out, obviously a pitcher. But on the hitting side, of course. There's been some guys that I

faced quite a bit in my career. Harold Ramirez and some other ones we're familiar with. Josh was telling me about a couple of the guys they have on their team that are prospects too.

It's just familiarizing yourself, but ultimately at the end of the day coming down to doing what I do best and knowing that will play really well.

Q. Any change of the rotation or will it stay the same for the next four games? Pitching rotation.

ERNIE WHITT: I don't see any changes, but we're going to play the first two games, and we have a day off, and we will reassess what we need to do at that point in time. As of now, it is the same.

Q. Josh and Tyler, what do you guys appreciate about Mike, about the way he pitches, and what are some of the subtle things you like about one another in the batter's box?

JOSH NAYLOR: I got an opportunity to play with Mike growing up, seen him grow as a player, also as a human too. Then see him kind of evolve into the All-Star-caliber pitcher he is.

He's phenomenal. He's relentless on the mound. He has a never-give-up attitude. He doesn't ever cave into his plan. He has a specific plan for each hitter he's going to face, and he attacks that game plan through and through. He doesn't kind of cave in.

I love facing him because, as a hitter, you like facing pitchers who are incredible arms, and it challenges you as a hitter to be super disciplined, be ready to kind of attack maybe something you're not comfortable attacking to kind of scare him away from it the next time.

So I think I grow as a player facing Mike.

TYLER O'NEILL: I think he's a bulldog on the mound. He's got really good stuff, trusts his stuff in the zone, attacks hitters, trusts his game plan. It's always a pleasure to play against Canadians like that, and obviously this the first time that we're playing together.

So just getting to know Mike as a teammate and more as a friend lately has been a great experience.

MIKE SOROKA: I think they forgot to mention that they both have pumps off me. So that's worth noting too. That's it. I'm done with that.

Q. Can you talk to us a little bit in advance about that

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**last game with Puerto Rico, it could be decisive to
decide who wins the group?**

ERNIE WHITT: Again, I think they're our third game. Puerto Rico is a good team. They're all Big League players. I'm very confident in the team that we have. Like I said, it's a balanced pool. A lot of people put Puerto Rico as number one. Who knows? You go out and play the game the way it's supposed to be played, and hopefully we have more runs than they do at the end of it.

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