

World Baseball Classic: Pool A - Canada vs Cuba

Wednesday, 11 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

Team Canada

Ernie Whitt

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Do you plan on speaking to the guys today? If so, what will your message be?

ERNIE WHITT: No, I think the message has already been said. Everyone knows what today means. A lot of them have been through it before.

I'll share something with you that Justin Morneau made a very nice presentation to our hitters today and our pitchers, and I don't need to say anything more after that.

Q. You said the guys know what they want to do. Is there a particular mindset, mentality, knowing that depending on the results tonight, you're either on a plane to Houston or back home?

ERNIE WHITT: I think it's quite obvious. Everyone knows what today's game means. Again, we stress being prepared, not giving at-bats away, our pitchers throwing strikes, just playing a nice, clean game and just to grind every at-bat out. Pitchers grind every pitch that you throw, execute it.

If we do that, then we feel we're the better team, but if we don't do that, then that's why you play the game and anything can happen.

Q. Ernie, you mentioned before, but you've been through a number of these win and advance games and they haven't broken your way. How do you reflect on past opportunities versus the one today?

ERNIE WHITT: Again, when we have opportunities to drive runners in, we need to do that. When we need to turn a double play, we need to do that.

It's just, again, I keep repeating it, how important it is for us to take care of all of the little things because, if we don't, then it usually creates a big problem.



Q. Josh is in the lineup today?

ERNIE WHITT: Josh is in the lineup.

Q. Can you share a little bit more about what some of Justin's message was to your hitters and pitchers?

ERNIE WHITT: It was a great little talk that, if it doesn't inspire you, then something's wrong with you.

Again, it was no one else needed to say anything. It came from him, and he's been through it himself. It just showed a true Canadian.

Q. Ernie, you've been managing here since the original. How has the tournament itself grown and changed over the last 20 years?

ERNIE WHITT: It has grown, definitely has grown. I think you're getting more of your superstar players or your billboard type players out to support it.

I still don't like the timing of it. For us to have a true World Baseball Classic, it's tough to have pitch limits and innings that they can play.

To me that's not the example of a true World Baseball Classic. How we change that, I don't know. We've all talked about it. I think everyone is on the same page with it. We love the concept. I think it's a great concept. Everyone loves putting their country across their chest and going out and representing their country and their families.

I would just like for it to become where it's a real baseball game and played the way it's supposed to be played.

Q. Of all the managers in the WBC, you're probably the one that knows Cuban baseball the most. You've been playing against them like forever. Last time that Cuba beat Canada was in 2011. Does that give you any confidence?

ERNIE WHITT: We know that they're a great ballclub. They can't surprise us. We know what they're capable of



doing. They're aggressive. They pitch well. They defend well. We know it's going to be a very difficult game to win, but we're determined, and I'm sure they are too. That's why I think it's going to be a great competitive game.

Q. I have kind of a twofold question. I'll start with the first one. In your position specifically, how have you seen Canada baseball change in all this time, especially during the time of the Classic?

ERNIE WHITT: Number one, I think we're getting more players in the sport itself, starting out of high school, going to colleges, and then from colleges into pro ball. I just think the history is we're getting -- we actually have to make selections to our players now on what we feel is the depth chart that we have. That's made it a little bit easier for us, and it also has made us a little bit more competitive.

As far as the will, the passion, the pride that we have, we don't have to worry about that because that just seems like it comes natural. For me it's been fun to watch these kids develop and watch how -- like we had Clarke and Caissie three years ago and watched the development they had over the last three years, not only on the field but in the clubhouse, how they respond to things and how they react. So it's nice to see that growth.

Q. Caissie mentioned like, if it hadn't been for social media, he probably wouldn't have been playing baseball right now. Do you think there's like a particular moment that might have inspired this kind of rise?

ERNIE WHITT: I can't pick out any certain moment whatsoever. Everyone seems like they want to talk about the Mexico-Canada fight. It was unfortunate, but it was -- for some reason on social media, they just love to play it over and over and over.

We're out to play baseball. We're out to take care of business. That to me is the way it's supposed to be.

Q. Regardless of today's outcome, what do you want people to take away from Canada baseball right now?

ERNIE WHITT: We never gave up. We will fight till the end. I'm very proud of the team that we have assembled over there.

Again, you play the game to win, and we will do our best to do that today.

Q. What are your thoughts on Livan Moinelo and how tough of a challenge he's going to present? And then Yariel Rodríguez as well?

ERNIE WHITT: They're good ballplayers. We have our plan how we're going to do it, but they're good ballplayers. Hopefully, if they hit the ball, they hit it at us.

Q. Ernie, you just mentioned the Mexico-Canada brawl, and it had to do a lot with you guys wanted to get more runs, Mexico didn't understand it in that time. Now everybody understands it and you have this situation now going in group B. I want to know what's your take on this, there's even this possibility with the tiebreakers that the USA can go home today? Basically, the question is this tiebreaker situation, it could be nerve-racking. I know you've gone through it also.

ERNIE WHITT: It is nerve-racking, but there's got to be a way to eliminate it and the better team wins. It's hard to say. How are you going to make it better? I don't like adding runs, kick a dog when he's down. I don't like doing that. I like to play it to respect the game.

A lot of times in these situations, you may have a seven or eight-run lead in the eighth inning, and your job is maybe for our team to advance, we have to score another run.

So I'd like to see them get away with that. I think they have a little bit with the earned run type of format that they're showing. But I like the head-to-head matches better.

Q. Are you putting any extra right-handed hitters, Davidson for instance, to start against Moinelo today? Any other lineup changes?

ERNIE WHITT: We made a couple of lineup changes just in the order, but Davidson is starting today. That's one of the reasons why we have him on the team, is that he's a right-handed bat who has power potential for us.

He will be in the game, and we have some good left-handed bats coming off the bench if needed.

We met this morning, and we came up with this lineup today. Hopefully it will work.

Q. First base or DH for Josh?

ERNIE WHITT: That's undecided right now but I'm probably leaning towards DH, but we'll see.

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