

# World Baseball Classic: Pool A - Canada vs Cuba

Wednesday, 11 March, 2026

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Hiram Bithorn Stadium

## Team Canada

## Ernie Whitt

### Postgame Press Conference



Canada 7, Cuba 2

**Q. Congratulations, Ernie. Definitely this is obviously iconic, like historical. Being the first time you guys go through to the second round with this group of guys, they definitely delivered what everyone was expecting of this team. How proud do you feel about these guys battling until the last out and playing all 27 outs?**

ERNIE WHITT: I'm very excited about it, needless to say. It's been a long haul. The team has really come together. We've gelled. I try to look at positives and negatives, and we still left way too many people on base. We still made some mistakes we shouldn't have. Hopefully as we go forward, we will clean those up.

As far as the organization is concerned and representing our country, you couldn't ask for more. We're very excited from the top all the way down to the bottom. It's been a lot of hard work, a lot of phone calls, but we're going one more step, and we're not done with that.

**Q. Ernie, you spoke a little before the game about Denzel Clarke. Could you just tell us what you saw from him in this tournament and what you're hoping to continue to see from him moving forward in his career?**

ERNIE WHITT: Again, he's one of the better defensive outfielders in the league. Any time we have a lead right now, I'm not going to take him out of the game because he saved a lot of runs out there in center field.

He's still working on his offense, but he's a tremendous athlete, and he's only going to get better. So I'm looking forward to watching his growth as we go forward.

**Q. You have been in six consecutive World Baseball Classics, and this is the first time you're taking this team Canada to the next round. I ask you what**

**feelings do you at this moment? And in addition, will this help the development of baseball and the growth of baseball in Canada?**

ERNIE WHITT: We're extremely proud that we're moving forward. It took us a long time to do it. We now have some real good positional players. We have some real good arms out there that are performing for us to move forward. I'm excited about that.

I think there's a lot of people that are watching us here in the WBC, and hopefully we can continue to go forward.

**Q. Can you talk a bit about what specifically has made this team so successful this week, maybe some things that aren't immediately obvious to the eye or that don't show up in the box score?**

ERNIE WHITT: I think the biggest thing is our pitching. Our pitching has been extremely good. We've gotten them throwing strikes. When we do walk people, it seems like we come back and score. I think they've bought into it finally, let's take our chances and throw the ball over the plate and see what happens. I think that's been a standout for us.

We have had some key players that have come up with some big hits, Toro and Lopez and Caissie. I mean, those guys have come up big for us in a lot of situations. We still have left a lot of men on base where we could have made it a little bit easier on the manager if we scored.

**Q. Ernie, you know how much this means to a lot of people. Who are some of the people around Canadian baseball that you're happy for and thinking of right now?**

ERNIE WHITT: First one is Greg Hamilton. He works his ass off day in and day out. I don't know how he does it. He is so dedicated to the game of baseball in Canada, working with the younger kids, working with the grass roots. I guess where I'm at at that level, I just get the benefit of having these kids, watching them grow and develop.



They have experienced international play many times over before they even get to me. So it just makes it easy. But I think Jason Dickson and Greg Hamilton have done a tremendous job.

I'd be remiss to say if I didn't mention Jim Baba, God rest his soul. He's been a big part of baseball Canada.

**Q. James Paxton after he retired, this is going to be his swan song. For him to be able to advance, I mean, and not only advance but contributing as well, what did you see from him out there? And for you personally to see James Paxton reach this level means what to you?**

ERNIE WHITT: I think the biggest thing is that he wanted to do it. He wanted to come and come out of retirement, get off the couch, and come and throw for Team Canada because he's never done that before. He's experienced league championships and played at the highest level in Major League Baseball, but he never represented the country. I think that was the biggest thing for him.

You know what, he may come out of retirement because I think his last pitch at 49 was 97 miles an hour. You'd be foolish if I'm an organization and I see a left-handed pitcher that can still throw 97 and command it, I would definitely take a look or make a phone call.

**Q. Ernie, with Cal going five and maxing out his pitches, what were you expecting? You said yesterday pitching plan went to plan A. Which plan were you on today?**

ERNIE WHITT: Actually, it went beyond plan A today, I mean, in a good way. We were hoping for three innings, but I'm watching him, and I see the ball coming out of his hand well. I'm going he's still throwing. He's still hitting his spots and changing speeds.

I've said all along, I just use my eyes, and I just see that the hitters are not barreling up the ball. They hit a couple balls hard, but nothing was very consistent. I had a feeling that we're just going to roll with him because I could see what he was doing. He got close to the 65, and then we turn it over to the bullpen, and they did a great job.

**Q. What's the mindset now going into the second round? Who are you going to be rooting for tonight, and what are your expectations of the mindset?**

ERNIE WHITT: We're not going to be rooting for anyone other than ourselves tonight. We're going to get on a plane, go to Houston. We'll find out probably when we land

who we play, and we'll prepare for that.

It's amazing, anything can happen. That's why you play the game. We'll be prepared. Whoever we're playing, they'll have a battle on their hands.

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