

World Baseball Classic: Pool B - United States vs Brazil

Friday, 6 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team United States

Bryce Harper

Tarik Skubal

Pregame Press Conference

Q. For both of you guys, what does it mean to represent your country in a tournament like this? What do you think the atmosphere will be like over the next couple weeks?

BRYCE HARPER: There is nothing like it. Really excited to put the nation's colors on my chest again. I did it as an amateur. And I'm super excited to do it again. And looking forward to playing with the guys I'll be playing with. I think the atmosphere should be pretty dang good, especially being here in the States.

TARIK SKUBAL: I couldn't agree more. It is my first opportunity to play for Team USA. And I am excited about it. I think it is going to be a ton of fun over the next two weeks or so.

Q. Kind of touching on the environment point, I guess what do you want to see in the crowd in that growth as baseball becomes more of an international sport and kind of the passion there? What do you want to see fans kind of buy into on that front?

TARIK SKUBAL: Just creating a great environment. These games are going to feel like playoff games or World Series games. Those environments are what baseball is and that's where baseball is kind of going. That's why it is the best sport in the world because it is pretty international.

When you look around at every pool, you look at all the different games going on around the world, those environments are always going to be pretty special. And that's what makes the game of baseball so beautiful.

Q. Given the excitement over the hockey team in the Olympics, would you like to see baseball back in the Olympics? It has been a while.

BRYCE HARPER: Yeah, I have been fighting for LA '28



for a long time. I think my whole career I have been trying to get something started or coming up.

Obviously the WBC is great, but it's not the Olympics. That's no disrespect to the WBC or anything. But everybody knows when the Olympics are on everybody is watching. Doesn't matter what sport it is. It could be the most random sport and it has all of the fans watching it.

I hope LA '28 happens. I'm hoping the next CBA agreement can happen where teams and players can come to an agreement on taking that two-week break, especially it being in our home country.

It would be great for baseball. You talk about growing the game and being able to grow it at that, at the highest level would help out tremendously.

Q. Kind of a follow-up to that, I know there were some players who wanted to compete in this tournament who had issues getting insurance or were just told by their team owners that would they would prefer for them not to participate. It seems that could potentially be an issue with the Olympics, even if there's a break in the schedule for that. What do you guys think is the solution to that conflict for this tournament and potentially for the Olympics?

BRYCE HARPER: I think the big thing is, is obviously I understand it. From ownership standpoint, I totally get it. For Skubes to come out here and do what he does and pitch us one game -- I have most respect for pitchers who come in and do it because everybody knows he is going to get absolutely broken off next year, and he's going to make more money than anybody as a starting pitcher.

For him to be able to do that and do it for us is something I respect out of him. As players and owners we have to come to an agreement that works for everybody, what works for everybody, understanding that you can get hurt playing during the regular season, you can get hurt playing during the Olympics.

And I think if you look at it in a hockey way, then you see

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that. Sidney Crosby got hurt and, you know, he wasn't able to play the gold medal game. And his team knows that as he is going into that tournament. So you kind of just have to understand that it is real. It could happen.

But there's nothing like representing your country.

TARIK SKUBAL: I think, I mean, as far as the pitching standpoint timing is everything. If they can get the timing right to where it is not in a Spring Training ramp-up phase, I think that will reduce the risk of injuries for pitching, you know.

But I agree with everything he said. We understand the risk associated with it, you know, especially from clubs and playing for someone that is not your club. So we get it.

Q. Just how close are you guys watching the rest of the tournament, like with Japan having its unveiling yesterday and Mexico a few minutes ago having the performance they did?

TARIK SKUBAL: I woke up to Shohei Ohtani hitting a grand slam. I don't know what time it was at, but I woke up watching the video. And I am, like, nothing has changed, you know?

Then I had the game on at the hotel, this game prior, because obviously we play -- I am pitching against Great Britain, and you want to watch those games and stuff.

I think the tournament as a whole is going to be pretty special from a fan perspective and just growing the game of baseball.

Q. This is for Bryce. You mentioned growing up and playing for the USA baseball system, young age. How did that experience playing at a young age shape who you are right now and facing this tournament right now?

BRYCE HARPER: Yeah, I think it's the best part of playing USA baseball as a young kid. I went to two different countries, went to Veracruz, Mexico and then Barquisimeto, Venezuela. So I've seen two different cultures, the way they run the ship. It was really cool from an American kid going out there and watching.

You know, they had clackers on top of the dugout and the bottles and the bells and the whistles and all that. It was definitely different environment. A lot of fun playing in that.

And I think a lot of the USA guys will tell you it is some of the best experiences we have had. I remember I was playing with Manny Machado. We were walking down the

street. It was, like, 2 o'clock in the morning. We got a ham and cheese croissant from one of the vendors. Got in trouble for that. But it was one of the best nights just being able to get out, seeing different cultures and understanding where people come from all that kind of stuff. Pretty incredible.

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