

World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Great Britain vs United States

Saturday, 7 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team United States

Manager Mark DeRosa

Paul Skenes

Pregame Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with Mark and Paul.

Q. Mark, all things being equal, I am sure you would prefer this not to be the only time you'll pitch Tarik Skubal in this tournament. But just knowing that that's the case going in, I guess what are the emotions with that, knowing that, you're going to get to use him tonight, but it is the only time you're going to get to use him in this tournament?

MARK DEROSA: Yeah, I think it's great for the game of baseball. I'm appreciative that Tarik wants to be a part of this. I totally understand the situation he's in. I'm fired to see him go out on the mound.

Same thing, equal importance, though, trying to get some of our relievers out on the mound as well. These guys need to be built up for the season. We'll kind of monitor it. Clay Holmes has to get some pitches as well, kind of following Tarik. So, yeah, there's a whole jigsaw puzzle to this. But certainly proud that Tarik's here.

Q. Paul, what's it going to be like for you to get to pitch back to back with Tarik, both Cy Young winners going two games in a row?

PAUL SKENES: Yeah, it's going to be a pretty cool experience. I'm glad to share the dugout with him. I'm glad to watch him tonight. Hopefully he gives us a really good start that I can build off of.

Q. What do you think it's going to be like for the fans who just don't get to see two Cy Young winners pitch together like that basically ever?

PAUL SKENES: That's what All-Star games and World Baseball Classics are for. And certainly that's what World Baseball Classics are for now that we have that.

So it's good for the tournament. Hopefully in 2029 it's the same thing.

Q. Paul, you're going to pitch against team Mexico, knowing U.S.A.-Mexico, big rivalry. A lot of fans are going to be energetic. What about for you, what's the excitement going in to pitch that game?

PAUL SKENES: Just getting to go out there and execute, face a good lineup. Obviously it's going to be a big atmosphere. It will be a good chance to see where I'm at, too.

But biggest thing is just going out there and executing. So looking forward to it.

Q. Mark, all your hitters are obviously very smart baseball minds. But what makes Alex in particular a very bright hitter? Seems like he's studying like none other?

MARK DEROSA: It's funny, he's like the pseudo hitting coach in there, kind of on the Sean Casey and Matt Holliday. Special guy, had a chance to get to know him since 2017. Brian McCann's one of the bench coaches on this team and won a World Series with him.

He loves the game. He's got passion for the game. You saw his ABs.

I think that was the beautiful thing about last night. I believe it was like 17 walks and two hit batsmen. These guys don't give in. I mean 3-1 counts, you've got to come over the heart of the plate or they're not swinging. They're willing to pass the baton.

That's kind of what I was trying to build with the lineup. It's just the constant quality of at-bat kind of building off of each other. It's just constant traffic on the bases.

Q. Paul, knowing what Tarik has in front of him this coming winter, I guess what does it mean to you guys and the team that he chose to pitch in this tournament even if it's just going to be for one start?



PAUL SKENES: If there's any more reason to unite behind what we're doing, I mean, that's it. We're wearing U.S.A. across our chest. That should be enough. But we've got a guy whose going out there, putting himself out there for us, for the country. That's pretty cool stuff.

If this game were just about Tarik, he's sitting in Lakeland right now watching the WBC. But it's not about him. It's not about me. It's not about any of us. It's a whole lot bigger than us. I'm glad he answered the call.

Q. Mark, you talked about the jigsaw puzzle with the pitching. Seems like you're going through on the hitting with a lot of lineup changes today. How are you going about that, both which new guys to put in and moving the guys around in the order?

MARK DEROSA: I wanted to get everybody start in pool play. There's no question about it. I felt like Bobby, man, he was the dirtiest guy last night. He was sweating. He had seven ABs.

Wanted to get Gunnar involved early. We had kind of moved around some guys in the exhibition games -- put Gunnar at third and Bregman over at second. I don't know how much in love Alex was with playing second base. I just kind of wanted to see that transpire.

I felt this is a perfect opportunity coming off last night to get Bobby and Brice off their feet, get Gunnar in there and get Ernie Clement a start.

Q. Schwarber is a lot different lead-off hitter than Bobby Whit is?

MARK DEROSA: Yeah, he said that upstairs. He goes, you went from the fastest leadoff hitter to the slowest leadoff hitter.

I had talked multiple times with Schwarbs during the season about where he wanted to hit in this lineup. He said he truly, he goes, I'm not going to change my approach whether you lead me off or bat me fourth.

So I just felt last night, kind of coming off that game I felt it was kind of an ugly grinder game. I felt like Brazil was making 75 pitching changes, and there just was no flow to the game. I just felt like guys needed to get off their feet today.

And with you know I would have liked to have maybe gotten Judgey or somebody like that, but with Buxton getting hurt I wanted to give him a day.

Q. You mentioned getting the relievers in there. We know about the pitch-count restrictions and stuff. Without revealing state secrets, so to speak, what considerations do you have to go through when you decide which relievers to pitch?

MARK DEROSA: I think they all want to touch the mound. You don't want to give them, like, four or five days off in between. Like, last night, I know everybody was, like, what are you doing bringing Mason Miller into a 15-5 game.

But they weren't out there in the outfield when I had a conversation with them during batting practice, where he's like, hey, I need to touch the ball tonight if you want me ready for Mexico. Right?

Even if it's one batter in-game, I think it means a heck of a lot more than some live bullpen on a back fielder or during our workout tomorrow.

So my goal is to try and get everybody to touch the mound at some point tonight, which probably, hopefully, won't happen and we'll adjust off of that.

Q. Just real quick, anything new on Buxton? Would he be available?

MARK DEROSA: Yeah, he's fine. He would be available to start tonight, yes.

Q. Paul, college, majors, World Baseball Classic. What are the similarities? What are some of the differences for you?

PAUL SKENES: Well, the biggest similarity is that it's just baseball. I think it's funny -- I don't know, I watched the game last night. I watched a couple of other games. I almost think the World Baseball Classic is a little closer to college baseball than Major League Baseball. Obviously you've got 17-year-olds out there and you've got 43-year-olds out there, too. It's kind of a good mix.

But just seeing how guys play the game, the enthusiasm, the energy in the clubhouse, in the dugout, on the field, in the stands, everything, it reminds me a lot of college in some ways.

It's funny how a lot of stuff changes, but at the end, it's kind of all the same.

Q. Paul, can you describe what it feels like -- I guess how different it is seeing maybe kids and fans in the stands at LSU wearing your jersey, Pirates Stadium wearing your jersey, but then seeing them wear a Team USA jersey with the name on the back?

PAUL SKENES: I haven't noticed a ton of kids wearing my jersey, to be honest, USA jersey. I kind of like that it doesn't have the number on the front so that you can't tell whose jersey it is when they're facing you.

But it's pretty cool. And out of all the jerseys I've had over the past few years, the U.S.A. one is the one I'm most proud of wearing.

Q. Mark, this game against Brazil and GB, do you approach them in a different manner than to what you do against Mexico or Italy because there's a slight less familiarity with some of the players you're up against?

MARK DEROSA: No, I don't think so. I just think coming off last night's kind of siege, I felt like this was a great opportunity to kind of get Gunnar and get Ernie in there and get them at-bats, because they will be needed. If and when we advance in this thing, it's going to take all four team position players to get this done.

Obviously Cal's down tonight. We'll give Will Smith a start behind the dish. Just an opportunity to get everybody in the flow games 1 and 2. We've had honest discussions about where I see them as we progress in this, but I think it's a great opportunity and night for them to get out there.

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