

# World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Brazil vs Mexico

Sunday, 8 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

## Team Mexico

## Manager Benji Gil

## Julian Ornelas

## Alek Thomas

## Postgame Press Conference

Mexico - 16, Brazil - 0 (6)

**Q. Julian, can you tell me a little bit more about, after that home run, how it made you feel? That was your debut, and then you got a home run. What was going through your mind? Were you able to talk to your siblings and your mother?**

JULIAN ORNELAS: Good evening. What can I say? I think it was one of the most beautiful moments in my career. I am thankful to be here.

I've said this before, and it's something that I was going to cherish. And it was just that in the moment seeing our Mexican fans supporting us. As I was running through the bases, I was simply just staring at the stadium and looking for my mom. And thanks to God it was a beautiful moment.

**Q. Alek, an important victory against Brazil. Your dad was in the opposite dugout, both professionals. How difficult is it to manage family and rivalry at important events like this in the World Baseball Classic?**

ALEK THOMAS: It was really fun today to play against him and see him in the other dugout. We only got a chance to do that back in 2019, and we had talks about doing it at the big league level and never got a chance to do that.

But to do it on the big stage such as the WBC is super special and my family is here my family was watching, I think he was on TV a lot today. It was super fun and I'm glad he was in the other dugout able to see me play.

**Q. Benjamin, what does it mean to win in this level by a huge margin and to do everything that you were planning to on the field?**



BENJI GIL: Let me start backwards. Manny Barreda will be the pitcher tomorrow.

It's too easy to show who is going to be the starters when it's something obvious who was going to start. But every player that knows they're not starters, they're right there. They're ready.

And I was talking to our players about that. We play baseball the way it should be, like with aggressiveness, just as it should be, no matter who the opponent is, no matter if you saw (indiscernible), he ran the basis no matter what the margin was.

We came here to play baseball, we came to play our best baseball with our opponents. And we know that Brazil is not the strongest rival or opponent out there. But at the end of the day we had to play our best baseball, and that's what we did today.

And, again, I was mentioning this to the team. Something that was very important to me, which is super magnificent, when the players ran fast, so not allow the play to be extended, so that hunger, those significant plays display how in the game the guys are.

That's the essence we want to show. That's the essence of this team -- each and every one of them giving 100 percent to give our Mexican fans everything we've got.

That was such an important moment. Not significant to others but for us, yes, for our team and our fans.

**Q. First of all, congrats to all of you. Benji, Mark DeRosa was telling us that it didn't matter who was going to do the opener tomorrow, that he trusts all 17 players and that he had the 30 best players in the world. Is there something you would like to say?**

BENJI GIL: Do you want me to get into a pickle here? I guess I'm not that type of guy, according to you all. But, yeah, he's right. It doesn't matter who is the opener for us. And I can say the same thing about them. It doesn't



matter.

It's an American pitcher against a Mexican pitcher. One is going to play against the other. Does he have the 30 best players in the world. I think the Dominican Republic has something to say about that. I think Japan has something to say about that, too.

I don't know if they have the best 30 players out there, but the Dominican Republic should have the right, Japan should have the right to say something, Venezuela should have the right to say something as well.

I don't know if they're the best in the world. We just want to be the best players of that day.

I've said this before, they are a super team. They have a roster full of stars. They go to All-Stars, MVP candidates, Cy Young, Golden Gloves, Silver Bat.

But it's not about rewards, it's about a game. And we're going to go out there and give it our best. If it was enough, great. If not, we know that we give it all.

**Q. Would you like to leave a message, a positive message?**

BENJI GIL: Well, no, I you want me to say good luck to them, like I want them to win or something? Come on, get out of here. It's not like that.

**Q. Benji, what does it mean to you to hear (in Spanish), you hear it played, and the whole crowd offered a rendition of the national anthem? Do you feel at home in Houston? Also, if you could add, what have you learned from Alek Thomas over the last two WBCs, and how committed he is to his mom's Mexican roots?**

BENJI GIL: Well, I know he's 100 percent committed, but he's a stud. I mean, he's an absolute stud. He's about to have a breakout year. I think he's going to become a perennial All-Star, a Gold Glove candidate every single year -- while he's young, which he's still young. Maybe not at 37, 38.

But even with that comment, it goes to show what I think he's going to be I think he's going to be a 15-, 20-year type of Major Leaguer. Right? I think he's going to be a star. I think he's going to be the foundation of a winning team. He already was a center fielder for a World Series team that just didn't win the championship, right? I'm hoping that he's a center fielder of a team that wins the WBC.

And the renditions, yeah, the national anthem, totally

enthusiastic. At the end of the game, after we won, it's really awesome, right, to hear those songs after a victory. I'd say that the only thing that says that I'm trying to get inside, so I can go get a shot of tequila to celebrate, because you can't drink water with those songs (laughter).

Anyhow, at the end of the day, it was a great night for Mexico. I think it was a great night for baseball, but maybe not for Brazil, right?

It's unfortunate, but I congratulate them on having gotten this far. And it's great to see a country that's not typically known as a baseball country participate in the WBC. And hopefully this will help grow the game in Brazil, and we'll continue to see this country grow its baseball players and be participants in the WBC.

**Q. I wondered if all you guys could answer this. What do you think the atmosphere will be like tomorrow? And how much are you all looking forward to this match-up with the U.S.?**

ALEK THOMAS: I think tomorrow is probably going to be similar to tonight, but like times two or times three. The crowd, the Mexican crowd always shows out. And this seems like the place that Mexico fans like to go crazy.

I'm looking forward to tomorrow, and it's going to be lit.

JULIAN ORNELAS: For sure, like during the first day and today, hearing the national anthem was something so beautiful that it gives me chills. I can't wait until tomorrow's game, being in front of that crowd in this stadium, and it's going to be a spectacle for everyone.

I think they're waiting anxiously for a game like this. It's going to be super beautiful for all of us.

BENJI GIL: Yeah, we're excited, I think they're excited. At the end of the day, it's become a rivalry when maybe it should never have been a rivalry. Maybe their rival should be Japan, Dominican, Puerto Rico. But it's become a rivalry because we've had success.

Tickets sell quick, right? It's a big ticket. It's a big ticket, considered as just a sporting event, not just a baseball event, not a baseball game. It's one of the most anticipated baseball events of the year.

And credit to the ugly duckling, which is Mexico, that maybe never should have been their rival. But we've done it by doing our job on the field.

And we're excited to play another great team. And we know they're great. I mean, they're great. They're a great

team. But we're just going to try to be just a tiny bit better. Even if we win by half a run, we'll take it.

**Q. Alek, what's the vibe like being on this team when you guys are clicking on all cylinders like this? How does that compare to, for example, the vibe on the D-backs on your postseason run?**

ALEK THOMAS: Yeah, it's super fun. The guys in the clubhouse are very energetic and very positive, much like the Diamondbacks.

Unfortunately, you might not get these type of games throughout the regular season. The only time it might be as hype is probably the playoffs. That's what makes these games so meaningful.

And the guys in our clubhouse are awesome and I'm glad to share the field with those guys. It's so fun, this tournament. And I'm glad to be a part of it.

**Q. Benji and Julian, they think you're the best player in Mexico. Do you think this home run was the most important one? And, Benji, Alexis Wilson, he's one of your buddies, you've taken him to different events. He responded. He answered the call. There are some critics about that, but what do you feel?**

JULIAN ORNELAS: Well, I will place this home run as the most important one in my career so far. The fact that I'm wearing these colors in such a huge stage gives it even more an importance to that home run. And the fact that my family's here with me, I think I will say that it's one of the most important ones in my career.

BENJI GIL: I want to make one thing very clear. It's not that I take him. I'll be a bad evaluator if I didn't take him. But I took him because he's an excellent catcher. Defensively he's at the level of the Major Leagues without a shadow of a doubt.

During the last Classic we played, he gave us a win against GB. And he's the one that did the two runs. He's the only one that came in for one of the best catchers in baseball, right? And he kept the defensive end behind the plate. I think it was a low ball, too, and he blocked that pitch like if it was on third.

He plays baseball the way it should be played. He's a horse. He's a catcher of such skill. It's not that I did a favor or I just brought him. But I can actually recognize his talent and I give him credit. And what he did was to not make me look too bad.

And at the end of the day people are going to judge

because that's what they like to do, and we try to make the best decision for Mexico for our team, for our people, and to give y'all great memories.

**Q. Benji, there's only been two, three games. There were 6,380 fans in the stadium today. You all played Arizona, Mexico and first time here. Is this a series that you have been anticipating for as a manager? Actually 36,000. And what about two days ago? 29,000. But yesterday there was 34,000. It was actually less during the U.S. game than today. What about tomorrow, we'll see?**

BENJI GIL: Tomorrow, I heard -- I don't know if it's true; you can all check this out -- but they're doing like a standing-room only for 3,000 people. I don't know if that's true. I don't know. I heard.

But tomorrow's stadium, I can bet you, I can bet you all that it's going to be a full house. It's going to be packed because of the U.S. and because of Mexico and because Mexico's facing a great team.

How beautiful it is, right, that we have such fans, countrymen who saved money, probably two, three weeks worth of salary and they save and try to travel and come here. So I appreciate all of them.

And so today was like 36,000. I don't know how many were Brazilians, but to everyone that was present, that were here, even if they're Brazilians, I thank them from the bottom of my heart to make tonight special, because it truly was.

Yes, for what was displayed on the field, but also because of what the Mexican crowd did. Also when Brazil would do a hit or a special play, the Brazilians would get up and give an ovation.

So we're also playing for that, for grand memories. So I thank each and every one of them.

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