

World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Mexico vs USA

Monday, 9 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Mexico

Manager Benji Gil

Postgame Press Conference



USA - 5, Mexico - 3

Q. If you can just go over how the team felt being down after five runs until the end of the game. And second question, what was going on with the umpire in regards to that part of the game that was critical?

BENJI GIL: I have to say that I was very inspired the way that the team ended or finished the game, knowing that they were facing one of the best pitchers in the world. It was a tremendous lineup, and no one gave up. And everyone kept fighting. And we were just down a swing. That was the only difference from tying the game.

But we were very proud of them. And the last, well, it's actually kind of weird for you to have a good taste after a defeat. Obviously I wanted to win, but this team showed us a lot. And it actually excites me for what's to come.

And we're upset because we're obviously missing out on some pitching. And obviously we're humans, we're going to mess up.

Randy's pitching, that was out of the ball -- if it was a different call then it would have been kind of acceptable. But saying 3-2 that's a huge difference because it's not a ball. It's a base on ball, not the way he called it. So in Nacho's case, there's a pitching -- could have been a strike, could have not. I think it was a low one and then two pitches after it was a high one.

So, okay, I mean, one of them has to be a strike, but not both. You can't have one that's like super low -- or maybe I was wrong on that. And if I did, it's, again, my apologies. But if I didn't, then I would not apologize at all because those are major differences in a very important game.

Q. We know that you're the manager. You decide. But would you consider perhaps leaving Cruz in could have produced a shift in the game? And would you

consider continuing the same line of conversation if there was more of a favor on the U.S. team?

BENJI GIL: Cruz has always been on the magazines of Mexico for the last couple of years. He left two pitches -- and they seemed too comfortable. So he did mess up on one of the pitches. It cost us, like, three runs. But I know there's too many out there that are going to be criticizing me, but for them to understand, we were very limited.

So the idea was that perhaps Cruz could give us more than one entrance so that we could have a bigger, better margin to control or manage the game. But when Cruz only does like a third and allows us to get three more, that complicated the ending of the game.

The ninth inning we were talking we use Vodnik. Either we use Vodnik or Muñoz, which is the best closer we got in the world, because when Muñoz pitches, he won't be available against Italy.

If it's Vodnik and does X amount pitches, he won't be available against Italy. If Bernardino does the same, he wouldn't have been able to be available against Italy.

So those are things that you guys don't know. It's too easy to say one thing and give your opinion. But those are very critical arguments or discussions that we have.

And we have to respect the rules of the organization. If the organization has a restriction in regards to the pitchers, it's because they're taking care of them. So me, as the one that controls our national team, I have to take care of our national players in the best way possible.

Your second question, I'll have to watch the game again. Via was not the reason why we lost the game. I would have to watch the game again. There were more pitches that he messed up on, but it's okay.

Randy, that did get on my nerves because it was to me more of a face and a punch. But it's okay. Was it a good, was it a bad call? It's okay. He just didn't want to say what I told him. I went up to him and I shared with him a



comment. And he got upset, so I'm not going to let myself be stepped on either.

Q. You're so eloquent. Before that, what have you learned from Jarren Duran in this tournament? And as you noted how proud were you with your team's effort in this comeback?

BENJI GIL: Yeah, I'll tell you what, if I had one word to use, I would say admirable, the way they just kept plugging away, facing arguably the two best pitchers in baseball, in the world -- or two or three, right, best pitchers in baseball. Facing as everybody has considered, right, a super team, and yet they battled and battled and battled, and we were one swing away from tying the game.

If you want to go really in depth, we shut them out for seven innings. We shut them out for seven innings. And you change one pitch, right, you change one pitch, we're going into the ninth inning up 3-2.

I'm really proud of them. I'm really proud of them. They battled. I hope we play the U.S. again. That would be awesome. I would be ecstatic to face them again. For one, it's probably the championship. There's the championship in Miami.

In fact, you know what I want to face them more than I want anything else in the world, how is that? Unless, I don't know what the lottery is at right now, but if the lottery is right around 800 million, yeah, I'll win the lottery and cheer everybody from afar.

But outside of that, I desire that more than anything in the world, face them again in Miami, I think that we'll end up 1-1 against the U.S. this tournament. And Mexico won't lose again until three years from now.

Q. How about Duran?

BENJI GIL: Jarren Duran, superstar in every sense of the word. I was just kidding with him right now. I thought they said you can't hit lefties and last week you took Chris Sale -- I think it was Chris Sale I think he took deep? He hit a bomb off Chris Sale. And today he hits two home runs.

I think this tournament is going to make him even better. And the great thing about him, he punched out twice, and his energy in the dugout was like nothing had happened, right? And that shows resolve and that shows also big-time leadership qualities because that rubs off on the rest of the team when he's been punched out twice, and then his third at-bat he hits a bomb and the next one he hits a bomb, and he's the first guy out there cheering on his team.

Q. So with this score line, how will you feel about Italy? How will you guys be facing Italy when everything is on the table?

BENJI GIL: Well, everyone plays to survive. We didn't want to lose this game either. We wanted to win. So we're going to come out there with everything we got. And even if we won, that's, like, the argument, right? Like, what would if we would have won tonight?

They'd say the U.S. is going to beat Italy. We should beat Italy either way because then you'll be like 3-1 and then you go to a different route of circumstances.

So at the end of the day, if we would have won today, then facing Italy, you've still got to try to beat Italy or give it all for victory.

So now it doesn't depend on us anymore on tomorrow's game between U.S. and Italy. But we don't really care about it. But what we really do care is that from here on out, win four games in a row -- Italy first and then three with whoever it is.

Q. Javier will be --

BENJI GIL: Javier Assad would be the one starting against Italy, if I were to say.

Q. Tell me about Joey. You spoke about the way he was running or he ran to first base with the effort that he came on the pitch in the field. Today he looked the same with the same emphasis. Has he won his starting in the Mexican lineup?

BENJI GIL: Are you asking me to put him? I would have to talk to the rest of the coaching staff. But if you want me to say that you're the one letting us know he should start, I'll tell the coaches. We'll see.

We're going to see what happens with Italy. To be honest with you, I don't want to get ahead of myself. But let's say that if Larry has always done well with Nola, well that probably could be an influence. So let's be patient.

Thank God we don't have a game tomorrow. I'm very proud of the way we played, how the team gave it all. They did not surrender.

And enjoy tomorrow, and I think it's Wednesday, right, that we've got to play and be ready to win a game against Italy.

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