

# World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Italy vs USA

Tuesday, 10 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

## Team USA

## Manager Mark DeRosa

## Bobby Witt Jr.

### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Mark, obviously all the focus is in today's game, but as the tournament is shaping now, we're going to have some great games in the next stages. Has something piqued your interest besides obviously Japan?**

MARK DEROSA: Obviously, Albert's a good buddy. I played with him in 2009 in St. Louis. So, yeah, I've been kind of looking in on the Dominican team.

**Q. Mark, all games in Tokyo have concluded already and Team Japan is already flying to Miami. But can you talk about overall impression of Team Japan after seeing how they fought in the Tokyo round and the potential rematch?**

MARK DEROSA: I mean, Bobby can attest to this as well. There's a mystery about that team, for whatever reason. Fundamentally sound. Ton of respect for them. Obviously Shohei is the greatest player we've ever seen. What I watched Yamamoto do in the World Series last year is legendary stuff. I know they've got a solid team but we're fixated on Italy right now.

**Q. In this generation, we see so much federization among players. Did you get a kick or respect the fact what happened with Cal Raleigh and Arozarena just like Will Smith three years ago?**

MARK DEROSA: I know Cal had spoken to Randy. I know they're teammates. I'm sure you could ask him about it. But he had mentioned that they spoke about that, and he said, hey, kind of don't put me in that position.

I was unaware that was going to happen or unaware that it was going to happen with Will as well. But I mean, I get it. Emotions are running hot at the time.

**Q. You respect that?**



MARK DEROSA: Yeah, it's a tough -- you're in the fight, man. You're trying to represent your colors, your country. And I'm sure -- I wouldn't have had a problem if he dabbed him up. I don't think it shows any one way or the other. But he chose not to. And I'm good with that, too.

**Q. How much smack talk has there been with Vinnie and Jac?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: Really hasn't been too much, which is a good thing or saying something to Vinnie. He's not talking a whole lot. But we text every day pretty much and just seeing how things are going and everything. But nothing too crazy.

**Q. Bobby and Mark, it's been over a week now. A lot was said at the beginning of your practice games about the camaraderie on the club. How much has that grown in this week or eight days, whatever it's been, since you guys have all been together?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: It's special. It's just, from the day we all first met each other, we all kind of already knew each other, but now it's like it's a family in there. We're playing for what's on our chest.

If there was any ego that anyone had, it's gone. It's out the door. And we're just playing one day at a time, one game at a time for each other, and we're enjoying it too. We're taking it all in. We're soaking it all in.

After the game yesterday, we were hanging out in the clubhouse hours after the game, just talking, talking about the game, talking about the stories, the storytelling and everyone from the coaching staff to the players.

The bond that we have is special. That's what makes this game so great and this team so special. And it's such a fun time.

MARK DEROSA: We didn't leave the club -- I came around the corner, the entire team was in there, chairs all facing kind of the middle of the room. I'm, like, hey, are the



coaches invited to this party?

We hung out -- the buses got pushed back to around 12:30. So we were in there for a long time. It's a good group.

**Q. Bobby, last time you were here, it was in more of a growth role, got three at-bats. This time you're batting lead-off. You're a big part of this team. What are the differences that you've seen from last time as opposed to this year, for yourself and for this team?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: Yeah, last time the team was amazing, that we had too. And I think we're kind of put in a hard spot just where, we were in Arizona. A lot of guys were on their own, living in houses, wherever. Now here we're all together. In the hotel we're all together, riding the bus back and forth, spending that time together.

I feel like we just have more time together to spend to create the bonds. And just like the group that we had then was great. The group that we have here is amazing. Just everyone's bought into just winning. And they're not worried about stats, not worried about nothing besides just, at the end of the game, that if USA won or not.

**Q. Could you give an abbreviated MLB Central-style breakdown of McLean and kind of what makes him the right guy for this moment, despite the limited experience?**

MARK DEROSA: First phone call with him, I honestly -- you always lean towards the guys who have bigger contracts and have been in the league a little bit longer because you feel like there's a better chance of getting them on the roster.

With him only have a couple of starts in the big leagues, obviously, I watched it. It's 97 to 99, four-seam, two-seam, probably some of the best breaking stuff I've seen in the entire sport.

But the big thing for me was when I called him. It was like, Nolan, shot in the dark here. Any interest in Team USA? And he said, I'm built for this. I've been waiting my whole life for something like this.

This is a former two-way star. He kind of thinks a little bit differently than your normal pitcher. Wants the moment. I know he had a little sickness there in Port St. Lucie. He seems great. I mean he's absolutely jacked. We're all excited to see him go out there.

**Q. When you're an elite defender and you're playing with new guys, is there anything different you have to**

**do? Or is it just kind of you be you and everything falls into place?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: Yeah, I think everyone just knows where to be, knows what to do out there. Just been playing this game for a our whole lives. It's just coming down, slowing down the game, taking it one pitch at a time and just trying to get the out for the pitcher on the mound.

**Q. Bobby, having experienced this before, how much have you enjoyed seeing the first-timers on your team just kind of take this all in and soak in what the WBC is all about?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: Yeah, it's awesome, just like just hearing the stories from guys playing it back when he (pointing at DeRosa) played in it, and now getting to play it in the last time and now this time, it's just really fun just to see the game growing, too, itself. And just the atmosphere you get to get in here, March Madness, just playing playoff baseball in March, it's been amazing.

**Q. Aaron's the captain, but you have a lot of guys who are leaders on the team -- Schwarber and Bregman and all that. I'm curious if anyone's voice in particular has kind of stood out to you or maybe surprised you just about kind of their leadership qualities when you have that many leaders on the team?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: It's pretty much everyone on that team. Everyone's doing something to lead, either lead by example, lead by voice, lead in a meeting. Whatever it is. So that's what I think makes this team really so great, like there's superstars in there, but there's also all those superstars that are glue guys, that get everyone together, that come together as one. Whether it's a pitcher whether it's a position player, whatever it is, they're all very special.

**Q. What's the thing that you would take back to your camp with your team from the WBC?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: I think it's just having those -- like the talks after the game, just getting together, going over the game, and you just learn so much with everyone coming together and just that camaraderie that you have. And that's something that I want to bring back to K.C. And I feel a lot of teams are going to start doing that more.

**Q. Bobby, are there any, like, routines that you see from your teammates preparing here at the Classic that you hadn't noticed before or some things that you hadn't seen before that you're going to take back to the Royals with you?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: I think just the process of getting ready

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for a game, but also like the timing of these things are kind of crazy where the clubhouse opens super late. Like normally we're here six, seven hours before a game, whatever it is. Now you get here three hours before a game in a conference room, waiting for the game before to end and then changing in the conference room, going straight out on the field. And then your first swings are BP on the field, or your first swings are in the cage right before the game, whatever it is.

So you've got to make adjustments, but that's what's part of this game -- how well can you make adjustments and how quick can you do it.

**Q. Postgame story time. Who is is the best storyteller? And this is for both of you: Is there one that particularly stands out that you can share here?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: A lot of them may not be able to to be shared in here. Most of them could be. But I don't know.

Everyone has great stories. That's what's so cool. Everyone, whether it's from the coaching staff, I don't know -- Sean Casey has got some great stories. And just how he tells them is great.

Just guys who have played for a long time. Kershaw's got some amazing stories. I can't really put one on the number, but there's some good stories.

MARK DEROSA: I would agree with him. Sean Casey controls the room when he's telling a story. I mean, there's a classic where he almost killed Bob Feller, warming up for a game in Winter Haven that has made its rounds.

Schwarber, he's like the straw that stirs a drink for everybody. He's in it to win it. So, yeah, we enjoy having him in there.

**Q. Bobby, it's easy to forget it's March 10th, which is crazy. I was curious, watching you make those plays last night, does the defensive rhythm come to you pretty quickly? And how does that compare to the offensive rhythm? For an elite defender, how does that rhythm work?**

BOBBY WITT JR.: Just kind of those plays just happen. You can't really practice those. And so those are the fun ones.

But also get to Spring Training early, I feel like a lot of guys, talking to them, got to Spring Training early, got to work early. The work got faster early, in a sense. And so it's just trying to make sure you're ready to make those plays for pitch one.

And so that's really kind of comes down to it. And then, yeah, defense, you just go out there and you just gotta make sure you're ready.

**Q. Mark, when guys are kind of hanging out like last night and telling stories, could you see that happening during the Major League season where maybe some of the guys on this team take it back to their own team, especially on the road?**

MARK DEROSA: Yeah, I mean just their reactions to it, you can tell they miss it or they're dying for it.

Listen, the iPhone changed the world. Bottom line. We played in a different generation where we could do and say things that wasn't going to get out. I just feel like these guys are under such more of a microscope that they go back to their hotel rooms, and Bobby can attest, they're probably playing video games and hanging out, but we don't get to see it.

We played in a different time where we were staying in the clubhouses til wee hours in the morning, just having a few beers and talking the game. That has been the most enjoyable part of this for us, just kind of bringing the entire group together. I mean, that not only ended up on the bus, that ended up back at the hotel. There's some guys dragging today.

**Q. When you played, who was the best to do that, to get guys together?**

MARK DEROSA: I think it was just a different time, yeah, we did it a lot more.

**Q. One guy though?**

MARK DEROSA: When I played?

**Q. When you played.**

MARK DEROSA: No, I just think -- maybe Bobby can answer it. I don't know. It's just that's how we were raised in the game. When I came up, it was hotel bar and hang til 2:00 in the morning and talk shop with the guys. It's just not the case anymore.

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