

World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Italy vs USA

Tuesday, 10 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Italy

Manager Francisco Cervelli

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Anything happens in baseball, but when this tournament started, did you visualize Italy fighting it out with the U.S. and Mexico, three teams fighting for two spots in order to advance?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Yeah, just like I've said in the past, anything can happen on paper. People can think so many things. The U.S. is a very strong team. I'm not sure what would happen today. We'll go with everything we've got to get a win.

And tomorrow will be another day. Three teams got here with -- they were 2-0 until yesterday. But then everything got a little complicated. But we're here to play ball.

Q. The same question I asked Vinnie. What challenges and what opportunities could this game have on Italy? And also if you succeed, this game could have a big impact on the Italian baseball system. So what can you tell us about that?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Well, it's going to impact in a lot of different ways. For us, we're trying to change the mentality in Italy. And playing against USA, it's a dream for a lot of my guys.

But it's good for the guys in Italy. Back in Italy, they get to see that we're playing -- we're facing the best players in the world. And some of the Italian guys are here, born and raised Italians, and they get to say that, you know, I can do it as well.

So I want to change the culture. And we called it last year the Italian Way. Create an identity, it's not just participate, create an identity every time we show up, people know how we play baseball in our way with respect to others. And this is a great moment for us.

I want to thank all you guys -- you guys are here every day -- for sharing this information. And with you guys, they're



going to know more about what we're doing. And what we're doing is real.

So today I'm very happy because the situation we have, we've got a great team. We're going to play against the best ones. But also the impact that we're going to create, not only in Italy, but around the world.

Q. You end up in an interesting scenario where you need to win one of the games today or tomorrow. How do you attack this game today with a full mindset knowing that it could impact tomorrow's game?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Well, we worry about today. We've got a great pitcher today. He knows everyone in the USA. We focus on today's game. We come here to play baseball. We know the situation.

Tomorrow even if we beat USA, we've got to beat Mexico. We've got to win every game. It's better to go 4-0 than 3-1. But we focus on today, and tomorrow's a different day. We think about Mexico.

Q. The topic has come about during this cup in regards to the batters. Yesterday there was a little small debate. You as a manager, as a coach, what's the conversation between you and other countries, other teams?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: Well, first and foremost, everyone can be whoever they want to be. If you don't agree with someone, that doesn't define who you are as a person. Another thing, that's between the players. We don't get involved in that.

Everyone and anyone can do whatever they think is right. There's a term in that, when they say "play ball," friendships go out the window, and you can't take things personally.

Whether it's a catcher or pitcher or batter, and you all have to say hi to each other. But it's normal. But even in this cup, everything counts, and everything does not count. So everything's the same to me.



Q. With Italy not having done well in recent World Cups in soccer, in fact, not even making it for the last two, and this year they have a lot to do, what could a nice run by the baseball team do to maybe heal that a little bit in Italy?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I don't think that we're going to be able to heal that. Soccer in Italy is a religion, you know? We're going to bring a different kind of joy. It can be amazing to win the whole thing.

I dream about that. But soccer is something very serious, man. And I think that they will qualify. You're talking about Italy, four times world champions. If I can put some good energy about winning this tournament, if it helps, let's do it.

Q. Talking about soccer, there are teams like Roma, Juventus, Milan, Inter, which one do you go for?

FRANCISCO CERVELLI: I go for Juventus in soccer, to the day I die.

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