

World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Italy vs Mexico

Wednesday, 11 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Mexico

Manager Benji Gil

Joey Meneses

Pregame Press Conference



Q. I don't know if you watched the game last night. I don't know if you guys suffered watching it. There was a certain scenario which had Italy in a bigger margin of runs. So there was a point that Mexico was basically eliminated. Obviously that's not the case now. You have the chance to win. So if you have over five runs, you're going to give U.S. a chance to advance. So does that interest you or not?

BENJI GIL: Well, before the game last night, obviously there were so many possibilities. If the U.S. didn't have that many runs, then we had a chance to win and move forward. Or if not, us winning by a bigger margin and taking them out.

At the end of the day, I think whatever scenario was given last night gave us just more tranquility. Today's focus is to win no matter by how much. We've just got to win, and that's it.

Whoever will move forward to the next round after today's win will be something out of our reach, something that's more -- that has the other two teams involved, but our main concern is to just win the game, period.

Q. Joey, coming back to the starting lineup after starting on the bench, is this like a win-or-go-home type of scenario for you?

JOEY MENESES: First and foremost, I'm very thankful for this opportunity. I've been waiting for this opportunity. Thanks to God it's happening. So I just want to commit to the team, to my country and be able to move forward in this competition.

Q. Joey, you're coming back to the starting lineup, how much did your numbers influence, like, Nolan and everyone else in order to put you in the starting position?

JOEY MENESES: Well, I really don't know what Benji will focus or the rest of the coaching staff focus on, but I am focused on doing my job, helping the team to win and take advantage of this opportunity.

Q. Benji, last Monday you were talking about how you were trying to manage your team for U.S. But now, Italy, in regards to the pitching, since the days have advanced, and we know the numbers now, do you have all your pitchers available, including the ones that you were thinking about Monday being available for today?

BENJI GIL: Yes, now we do have all of them, except Manny, because he threw a lot. So even if -- I mean, he could participate, but we don't want to risk him either, to pitch today after the huge amount of pitching he did the other day.

But we know that everyone else is available. Under the restrictions that we have, everyone else is available for today's match.

Q. After working on the plan, what comes next for everyone?

BENJI GIL: Everyone is involved.

Q. Who is going to bat, let me ask you that?

BENJI GIL: Well, I don't know who's going to bat, if it's a lefty, right, lefty, or left, left, right. And then we have a lefty, if it's right, right, or right, left, right, then it might be a righty. So you know what's the score -- I don't know what inning it will be.

If you were to tell me that, everything would be so much easier, right? But when you have everyone available, it would be a miscalculation to say, hey, this next player's going to come up next, right?

But like yesterday, there was people criticizing me for my decisions. So if I don't put them in the lineup as they tell



me to do and we don't win, it's like, oh, well you're a freak. No, I don't want to get involved with that.

So we know everyone is available. We're going to use the information that we have to make the best possible decision and make sure that that pitcher has a successful game and may carry us to the win.

Q. Do you have a message for all the fans that came to Houston to support and cheer for you all? And obviously some are home watching the game -- hoping to watch the game, hoping that Mexico advances?

JOEY MENESES: First of all, I want to thank everyone that came, that showed up, even to the previous games. That was very motivational to us. That's what gets our adrenaline and our energy out on the field.

And to be able to see the field packed with Mexican fans, it's something so beautiful, and we're very thankful because we know what it is to invest in coming and paying for a ticket and watch your team.

BENJI GIL: Yeah, very much what Joey said, we're so thankful that they show up. We know it's not easy. I don't know how many days it's been since the first match up until now, our match against Great Britain, I think it's like seven days or something like that.

It's hard to be here all week, and the hotel prices went up. The consumptions at the stadium, souvenirs, all those things, they're not cheap. We want to thank everyone that showed up, the ones that have been coming on different occasions, and beforehand.

I just want to thank them and say that we do feel all the applause, all the good vibes, all the cheers that they give us. If they're here in this stadium, then obviously we're going to hear that. Even if they're far, we're able to feel them.

We just want to thank them, and we're going to give it all for you. And blessings to each and every one of the Mexican fans here and across the world. I want a shirt, a jersey, but I don't know.

Q. Three years ago it was Randy Arozarena and Will Smith, and of course the other night with Cal Raleigh. Do you get a kick out of that or you become amused by that? What's your take? I know fraternization is different these days than when you played.

BENJI GIL: I mean, here we go again, right? At the end of the day, it's something that they'll sort out, I think, when they get back to to camp or Seattle.

I just told our guys, hey, you know what, let's focus on winning. We came to win. If some controversy comes out of that, so be it. They'll figure it out. They're big boys.

And all we can think about and we should think about is being in the right frame of mind to be at our best tonight to win and then move on.

Q. From what you've seen so far and what you know about the way Italy has played so far, what makes them challenging?

BENJI GIL: They're a great team. I've said it since before the tournament. As I started seeing their roster come together, I'm like, that's a good squad. That's a good squad.

I don't think -- maybe the baseball insiders were thinking along with me, the same thing. I don't think -- everybody just thinks, okay, well, there's no baseball in Italy, but there's great Italian -- American-Italian players that are in the big leagues.

And I'll say this, that even baseball in Italy has grown over the course of the beginning of the WBC to now. So in 20 years, I think Italy has come a long way in Italy, baseball.

And right now they have a great group of players, to be honest with you. And we have, at no point, thought they were not a great team. And we're prepared to face a great team that's on a roll.

And that's why our preparation for this game has been at the highest level, whether we treated it with the same enthusiasm and focus in preparation as we did the U.S. game or any other game.

Q. Based on what you saw from Italy last night, it was the bottom hitters that was able to help and beat U.S. pitchers. What makes you think Francisco would do with this Italian lineup against yours?

BENJI GIL: Well, we know Javier is a great pitcher and he's been very focused. He has a great history with pitchers. And at the end of the day, not because yesterday was their bottom ones that were infused means we're going to have to focus just on them.

We're going to focus on every one of them. But then explore, right, their weaknesses along with their strengths -- with Javier's strengths. It's like a crossword puzzle, and see, okay, how can I mix my strengths against their weaknesses and then strengthen our pitching, because that's when sometimes the pitching can get mixed up.

Because if you have a consistent batting rhythm, it's because most of the time it's a pitcher's fault, and then the batter doesn't take advantage of that or the hitter doesn't take advantage of that. So if you have a lineup that does that, that means that we cannot go careless. We cannot be careless with any other hitters because any of them can cause damage, can hurt us.

That was one of the topics we spoke about this morning when we were getting ready.

Q. What does it mean to you, represent to you that the national teams speak against you guys -- Aaron Nola, speaking things against you guys or put you guys in the burner, what does that mean?

JOEY MENESES: That means we're a really good team, and they've got to bring their very best in order to beat us. We've shown to the world that this team can play against any other team. We know that Italy has their best pitching coming up to this game. So that's the way I see it.

BENJI GIL: I agree with what Joey's saying. I think it's just to give them respect and show respect for the type of roster we have and the type of players we have because this took time to plan out.

So I think that both teams, when they saw who was in their group, or in their pool, they were, like, okay, this is the team to beat in order to advance.

So I think Italy, obviously, went out with their very best to the field to beat and win the way they won last night. But I believe that a lot of people thought that the ticket to the next round would be based on this game, on tonight's match.

No one thought that yesterday's match was going to end up like that. And no one thought that the U.S. was not going to be in a scenario where it could possibly not advance.

So all credit to Italy, too, and their team and their effort. So right now, what's left is for us to focus on what's to come.

Q. Just in general, what is it like as a manager going into a game knowing there's such an unusual scenario in play with the math? And how might that -- if you get to late innings and that's at stake, how that might impact the way you manage the game?

BENJI GIL: I'll tell you what, we've just got to try and win. Right? I can't worry about the score and who advances, who doesn't. We've got to win.

Their offense just showed yesterday that if you're thinking about something else, I mean, you don't focus on what you have to do against that team. You might be the ones out, right?

I know there's a scenario where if we win by four, we score four or less, the U.S. is out. But it would be a huge mistake to say, you know, I don't know, the eighth inning, hey, guys, let's take it easy. We're up 4-1. And, yeah, we have the best closer in baseball, I think. But still, I mean, they have a great offense.

We just can't give away any margin whatsoever. We've got to score as many runs as possible so that -- and the other thing is we have games moving forward. I'm not focused on eliminating one team or another because also if you win with a larger margin, it gives you the ability to give those pitchers, even the ones that pitch, a little more relaxed of an atmosphere. And it can also have you save certain guys within the limitations because the other thing is, as of right now, we don't know which day were playing.

It depends on the score, because of the U.S. not -- it doesn't matter if the U.S. finishes first or second, if they advance, they play Friday and we play Saturday. So it's not about who finishes first.

So those little things come into play as well. And at the end of the day, they're too good of a team for us to think about score. We just have to win.

Q. We were asking Cervelli last night in regards to how he sees Mexico. He wonders about the Mexican team, about your coaching skill, what surprises you more about their team, their squad? Would you ever invite them to a menudo in Mexico?

BENJI GIL: Of course, Francisco, he's a really good friend. Every time I see him, we say wonders about each other. He was a tremendous player. There's also an interview -- I saw it -- a lot of respect. Same from me to him.

And I respect them. But not today. I don't wish them luck at all. I'll send them blessings, obviously, and for everything to be good with him, but not the score.

But even I saw that hopefully he can coach one day in Mexico. And I would love that because he's a great spokesperson. I think he's a great person as well. I think he will improve Mexican baseball, with having such a great person that's devoted to baseball and with his knowledge of the game.

So, yeah, again, I wish him all the best of luck, but not

today.

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