

World Baseball Classic: Pool B - Italy vs Mexico

Wednesday, 11 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team Italy

Jon Berti

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Today you're on the news in Italy, and I don't think baseball has ever been in the news in Italy like today. So what does it mean for you and for the team?

JON BERTI: It's pretty awesome. We're here to win, and we're here working our butts off to put Italian baseball on the map. And it's pretty cool to see -- someone sent me a clip, the prime minister gave us a little bit of a shout-out this morning. It's pretty cool to see.

Q. Does it sit any differently, do you think, knowing that you're helping build baseball in your ancestral land but maybe a country that some of you guys may not have even been to versus --

JON BERTI: Yeah, I think that's kind of what was a big draw for me to want to play, is to represent my ancestors and my heritage. And my family's very proud of where my last name originates from.

So to get an opportunity to play for that and play for my family -- I wish my grandfather was still around. He would be loving this. That's one of the big reasons I wanted to play.

Q. Could you just talk us through, like Vinnie. He's a larger than-life-character but he seems to have basically brought you guys all together for this tournament?

JON BERTI: It's unbelievable how close this group has gotten in such a quick timeframe. We're all trying to enjoy it as best as we can because we know it won't last much longer, no matter what. It's a short tournament, unfortunately. We wish we could play all together for a long time.

But Vinnie gets a huge credit for that. He set the tone early for us. He's an awesome leader, very fun to be around and kind of drew everybody in and together. It's been a lot of



fun.

Q. If Italy went all the way and Vinnie still didn't have a hit, do you think he would just be happy being an espresso dispenser?

JON BERTI: He's been the happiest player on the team, trust me. I know he wants to contribute a little more, but he's made some great plays on defense. And his presence in the clubhouse, and the type of player he is is what we need. And he can hit. So we're not worried about that.

Q. Has Vinnie's joy spread to any other guys that have also become really fun or already fun, just needed to kind of have it drawn out of them a bit?

JON BERTI: Yeah, I would say so. It's very infectious. I think it's allowed -- we have a lot of younger guys on the team as well with a lot of talent -- and it's kind of allowed them to kind of open up and be themselves a little bit, which might be a little different than some big league clubhouses, where you need to earn a lot of respect.

But in this short of a period, it's good to get everyone on board right away. And he's done a great job of that, and the young guys have responded, which has been awesome to see.

Q. Not to put you on the spot, but among the younger guys, what are some guys who have made a big impression on you in the short time you've been together?

JON BERTI: I'm afraid to say too many names, because then I'll forget somebody. But, I mean, Kyle Teel has been phenomenal. Played against him a little bit last year in his rookie year with the White Sox. You just kind of don't know what kind of player or person they really are. Especially when they're so young, they don't really have much of a reputation yet. But he's been phenomenal.

Andrew Fischer's got a lot of energy. He's been great. Sam Antonacci has been awesome, another White Sox player. Quiet but, man, he can play. It's been a lot of fun



to see those guys have some fun.

And Dante Nori and Jakob Marsee, I mean, I could go on and on. Our whole roster of young guys have been phenomenal to be around. And they've been asking a ton of questions to guys like myself and Vinnie and some of the other veteran guys that are on the team. They just want to learn and get better. So the sky's the limit for those guys.

Q. Noticed obviously there's a big chunk that have MLB experience on the team. But could you speak to the college, the actual college baseball experience on the team? How has that prepared Team Italy to face an international tournament like this, unlike perhaps other teams that may not necessarily have that experience, to have that cohesiveness in this particular team?

JON BERTI: Yeah, I think the college experience, especially for me, was just a great stepping stone to the pro-ball level. And just to be in the clubhouse and get to know guys and have that type of relationship and maturity, I think, has been huge. And it's shown through for our team.

Q. I know Vinnie hands out the wine after the game. Are you guys really leaning into the Italian heritage in other ways -- what you eat, spaghetti and meatballs before the game, that sort of thing?

JON BERTI: We're a little bit at the mercy of what the clubhouse has for us, but we're definitely -- some of the management have brought over some different oil and stuff for the bruschetta and stuff like that. It's really fun to just talk about it and experience a little bit of it. And it's been a lot of fun.

Q. How many guys on the team can sing the Italian national anthem?

JON BERTI: That's a great question. I know at least three or four are Italian guys. I'm sure they could do it. I think we need a little more practice for that, but we'll get there.

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