

# World Baseball Classic: Pool C - Japan vs Chinese Taipei

Friday, 6 March, 2026

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

## Team Japan

## Hirokazu Ibata

### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Finally, this is day one. What's in your mind right now?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, the game, it's about to start. I'm so excited and I am trusting all of my 30 players, not only offense but the defensive group as one unit. I told them to go for it as one unit.

**Q. Yesterday, you mentioned to us that previous night at three in the morning, you felt the pressure. Did you feel any pressure?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: By watching yesterday's work out, that made me feel very comfortable. We already had enough preparation for the situation, so we had a great time. So I don't really feel any pressure?

**Q. Did you do any superstitious things this morning?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Not really specifically. Even when I was an active player, I don't have any routine or specific things, so no.

**Q. What's in your mind for starting pitcher?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: As previously I mentioned, I am expecting him to get be himself on the mound and get momentum. That's what I'm expecting.

**Q. The previous two games, you put Ohtani in the lineup first and batting second. Can you tell us, is he going to be lead off or batting second?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: As I previously mentioned yesterday, are you seriously willing to listen to the lineups? Within an hour, I think everybody will know. Please wait for another one hour.

**Q. What's your goal for the 2026 WBC tournament?**



HIROKAZU IBATA: Well, we don't focus -- we don't look for further things. We go step-by-step and we go aggressive, aggressive, aggressive.

**Q. Yesterday, Taiwan were defeated and they got lost. The Chinese Taipei manager mentioned to play hard. What's in your mind? What's your impression of Chinese Taipei's starting pitcher for tonight?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, he's tall and he has a great fastball, four seams, with great spins, and he has also got a cut ball, split, with great command, and he doesn't give up a lot of walks. So I want our hitters to be aggressive and try to hit the ball where they can hit, and we are trying to aim for a win.

**Q. In these international matches, I think you previously mentioned that hitting from the very first pitch in every single at-bat is important. That's what you mentioned to us previously. Being aggressive at every single bat, is it important to play in an international tournament?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, on the other hand we have a pitching count limit, and if you take a deep count and you don't really know for sure if you are going to hit against the same pitcher at the next at-bat, so being aggressive, swinging -- well, being aggressive means a lot, so it all depends on the situation.

**Q. Regarding the lineups, what was the toughest part to make a decision to make your lineup for tonight?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Not really. We have some option planning and so to the really.

**Q. Probably you are the first manager ever to be a manager with playing experience at the WBC tournament. If you could have a specific message to your players throughout your experience, please share with us.**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Probably the key things is to focus, especially for the beginning of the first inning, first play, I



want them to focus on it not for the first game but for the entire tournament. That's what I'm expecting to my players.

**Q. You played a couple games and seems like you earn a lot of runs with extra bases. A while ago you mentioned be aggressive, aggressive. Is this your game plan to score with extra bases?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: To be honest with you, winning is the only thing we are aiming. We watched the previous games, Australia, Chinese Taipei, Czechs and Australians, some of them score with big home runs and extra bases. That's how we learn and how we score as well with you doesn't have to be with extra bases. When we have an opportunity with men on base, we like to score.

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