

World Baseball Classic: Pool C - Japan vs Chinese Taipei

Saturday, 7 March, 2026

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

Team Japan

Hirokazu Ibata

Postgame Press Conference

Japan 13, Chinese Taipei 0

Q. How do you feel about having Ohtani as a hitter on your roster?

HIROKAZU IBATA: To be honest with you, helps us a lot but not only Ohtani but we score run a lot, so that's how we are right now. We are trying to keep rolling for the next game, next three games, as well.

Q. Let's talk about the starting pitcher, Yamamoto, he pitched 2 2/3 innings. How did you see pitching?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, I believe that he has a great pressure on him. But his first inning, he's got a very good fastball. The third inning, maybe he was a bit tired and he was a bit out of stamina. It's still early in the string but overall he pitched great to us.

Q. Tomorrow we are going to have a game against Team Korea. Who is going to be your starter for tomorrow, and if you have any game plan, please share with us.

HIROKAZU IBATA: Tomorrow's starter is Yusei Kikuchi, lefty. And the previous start when he pitched early inning, he gave up a base hit. But for tomorrow, I am expecting him to fix it in the pitching.

Q. You put Ohtani lead off and Yoshida in number fourth slot. What does it mean

HIROKAZU IBATA: We were testing Shohei either No. 1 spot or No. 2. I think having Shohei on the leadoff spot is better. So that's why we put him as lead-off hitter and having Yoshida on the clean-up spot, he's been a great condition. He swings hard and he swings well.

So from the beginning, the top of the order to the clean-up spot, we have a good lineup for tonight.



Q. Regarding Fujihira, when did you ask him to be ready out of the bullpen? Were you expecting him to pitch during the innings?

HIROKAZU IBATA: We were counting how many pitches Yamamoto has pitched. No matter how he goes it depends on how many pitches Yamamoto pitched, and the situation was two-down, bases loaded it was a tough situation. But I believe it's a great experience for him to be a better pitcher in the future.

Q. What did you see from the Korean win from yesterday, four home runs, what are your impressions from the Korean lineup from the game?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, very powerful offense with a hard swing. If our pitchers mislocate, it could hurt us a lot. That's my impression of Team Korea's offense. For tomorrow's content, we're trying to minimize the long ball.

Q. Hitting in the 8th spot, Genda had a base hit with great defense. You mentioned yesterday going aggressive, aggressive. How do you feel about watching him play?

HIROKAZU IBATA: As everybody knows, Genda is probably the No. 1 defensive player, and also, as a number eight in the lineup, he has great result with RBI single and whenever he's on base, that could help our opportunity to score runs. So he did a great job for tonight.

Q. Shohei in previous games he was 0-for-5 but he went 3-for-4 tonight. What was the difference between the two previous games and the three base hits tonight what was the differences?

HIROKAZU IBATA: I don't know. I can't tell. I don't know. Well, he's very good at the actual game. I think the previous two games, it was just pre-tournament games, and before the game, by watching Shohei's pregame routine, it impressed me. He knows how to maintain and prepare for the big game.

