

# World Baseball Classic: Pool C - Korea vs Japan

Saturday, 7 March, 2026

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

## Team Japan

### Shugo Maki

#### Pregame Press Conference



**Q. The big game, Japan versus Korea. What's in your mind and how do you describe Team Korea?**

SHUGO MAKI: Yes, they swing hard. They score a lot. They can score from the top or from the bottom.

That's my impression. They're very tough opponent.

**Q. Their starting pitcher, what's your impression?**

SHUGO MAKI: Yes, he's a right-handed pitcher with a side arm angle. He let groundball a lot, fly ball a lot, so I'm trying to pick up the right pitch to swing.

**Q. Let me ask you about defense. The surface of the Tokyo Dome just changed. Did it affect any of your defense?**

SHUGO MAKI: Yes, comparing to the previous Tokyo Dome, the surface changed and the groundball, the surface made the groundball a bit weak.

**Q. Before the game start, yesterday's, last night pre-game you are pop up, cheer, you did to the Team Japan. Are you going to do the same thing today?**

SHUGO MAKI: No, I am not. I am not do.

**Q. If not, who is going to be the cheer up leader for tonight?**

SHUGO MAKI: I don't know. I was told by the coach by last minute, so I don't even know who it's going to be.

**Q. So any thought, any ambition of today's game, please?**

SHUGO MAKI: Yes, the Game 2 is lead us to the Game 3. Yesterday we won, but today is different day, another day.

So our aim is try to score first and try to minimize their run. That's my mind right now.

**Q. Last night you were hitting seven spot from top to the five and six. A lot of Major League players, their name were on it. How do you feel play with such big names and how do you feel for tonight's contest as well?**

SHUGO MAKI: Yes, no matter who you are, without a doubt our lineup is the very best of the best. No matter which lineups I'm going to be I'm playing same as usual. If I'm playing the bottom lineup I'm trying to be on base so that our top of the order can have a possible running score opportunity.

So trying to focus every simple at-bat and be on base.

**Q. Someone asked about Major League teammates. I heard that you had a conversation with Okamoto, the newcomer for Major League Baseball. What kind of converse you had with Okamotosan previously?**

SHUGO MAKI: Well, we had a little conversation with batting. Until the last minute he was taking a (indiscernible), so I just want to made sure that, hey, Mr. Kazuma Okamoto, are you having enough time to prepare for your BP? These are the conversation that I had.

**Q. This is just beginning of the first round. Previous round you had bit regret because you are not the daily player, but 2026 you are the daily player. What's in your mind? Is there any differences between 2023 WBBC and 2026 WBBC?**

SHUGO MAKI: Yes, previous round, previous WBBC I didn't play an opportunity to play at the semifinal and the final, but lately after my name was on the roster, on the 2026, I'm trying to -- well, I have been in good condition, and moreover, I am trusting myself.

So I have been doing what I do and be prepare for the game every single day.



**Q. As a second baseman you play keystone combination with Genda. Name of the defense. If you learn anything from Gendasan as a short stop, second baseman?**

SHUGO MAKI: Yes, throughout the practice when we have (indiscernible), yes. I'm always watching him practicing and he -- his reaction and especially for his first tip of the taking a groundball. That's -- I learn a lot, a lot, a lot by watching him from the beginning of the Miyazaki's walk-out.

So I learn a lot by watching him.

**Q. You seem to be a player that can lift the mood of everyone around you. Very energetic. People are drawn to you. You gave the speech before the game yesterday. Do you feel like even with so many Major Leaguers on the roster, players that are older than you, that you can still be your true self?**

SHUGO MAKI: Well, first of all, thank you for giving me the tips. My personality hasn't been changed from the early ages. I'm always the guy to make fun of and cheer up for our teammates. That's something it hasn't been change from my early ages.

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