

# World Baseball Classic: Pool C - Korea vs Japan

Saturday, 7 March, 2026

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

## Team Japan

### Hirokazu Ibata

#### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. The game, big game against Korea. A lot of attention paying, a lot of audience are expecting good game. What's in your mind?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, I'm trying to be as who we are. Then trying to get a win.

**Q. Previous couple games Team Korea has a lot of extra bases. What's your game plan to play against Team Korea?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Things we have to minimize is be on base, let them on base, and let them hit on extra bases.

**Q. Ko Young Pyo, their starting pitcher, what's in your mind? What's your impression?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Well he's a right-handed thrower with a great location with a side arm angle and he has a great command and sinking ball. So trying to focus what pitch we should hit and what pitch we should not hit.

**Q. Yusei Kikuchi, your starting pitcher, what is your -- how do you feel to put him on the mound?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, I want him to pitch with his strong point. He has a fast ball, four seam, and breaking ball as well with good command, and I want him to expect to draw momentum of the game.

**Q. If you have a specific game plan for tonight, can you share, please?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: No matter how we play, winning is everything. No matter who play on the field, I'm expecting everybody to play what they can do.

**Q. Regarding Shohei Ohtani, he has been doing BP before the game. By watching his long shoot distance what is impression? How did his BP affect Team**



#### Japan?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Well, as far as I understand, he is not the guy having a BP outside. Yesterday he is supposed to have a BP indoor cages, but I think he like to show his respect and he went there and he had an outside BP.

As far as my watching, I watching him, seems like he has a great condition and I am very pleased that he has a very good batting session in front of a lot of audience in Japan.

**Q. Regarding the defense of the outfielder, Suzuki and Yoshida, these two are mainly playing for designated hitter last season. So how do you expect them as an outfielder?**

HIROKAZU IBATA: Well, they were originally -- well, they have quite experienced as outfielder so I'm expecting just ordinary play to make out.

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