

World Baseball Classic: Pool C - Czechia vs Japan

Tuesday, 10 March, 2026

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

Team Japan

Hirokazu Ibata

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Your thoughts on the first-place clinch, and this is to be the last game of the WBC here in Tokyo. How do you see this game?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Some of our pitchers haven't been pitching and some of players did not play. So I'm going to use these players to give them the opportunity, and we are expecting all the substitution place to have a if result.

Q. Looking back over the three games, some players have been hot and some players have not been shot. So for tonight's contest, how are you making your starting lineup?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Recently, we still have time to adjust and we still have a workout day. So we still have opportunity, and I haven't quite made the decision on the lineup.

Q. Your starting pitcher, Mr. Takahashi, is making his WBC debut tonight. What is your feeling about him?

HIROKAZU IBATA: I'd like him to be as he is with a strong velocity fastball, and in combination with a split, and his money pitch is the fastball, so I'd like to check his velocity, mostly.

Q. Looking back at the Tokyo round, it had a huge audience, and now you're flying to Miami. Before you depart, what do you expect of today's game?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Well, I'd like to thank all the fans attending and I'd like make them happy, and I'd like to make the entire Japan be excited by watching us playing.

Q. You've had excellent production from the top of your batting order, the major leaguers but the second half of the batting order has been a bit thin. Is that something that concerns you and are thinking of making any changes as you head to Miami?



HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, when we start at-bat from the bottom of the lineup through the top of the order, in these innings, although they don't have a lot of base hit, but somehow they get on base, and they are working very hard. So I think they are doing all right.

Q. Curious, the topic of Netflix broadcasting the games has been one of contention in Japan. How do you view it and do you have any concern about the nation's accessibility to watch these games?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes I've been watching from this morning by Netflix, and right up to today's game, when we have the game done. I am so pleased that we are able to watch the American rounds and from morning to the midnight I am watching the full tournament.

So having Netflix covering all the games, I think we get better information than previous tournaments, which is good to us.

Q. A while ago you mentioned the bottom of the lineup, so Genda and Wakatsuki, the on-base percentage of them are good. How do you evaluate them?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, like previously, I said, yes, they are doing a good job, and once they are on base, our top of the order is having good at-bats. So that's how we've worked it out.

Q. Congratulations on first place in this round. For future quarterfinal and semifinal, do you have any check-in point, now that you have the big game coming?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Well, all I can say is just who ever is playing tonight, they are going to have an opportunity to play. So I am expecting them to be in good condition.

Q. Starting pitcher Takahashi, you have been selected from the beginning of your management signing. As a manager, how do you expect him as a starting pitcher?



HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, we have a great starting pitcher on our roster. And for tonight's contest, I am not expecting the number of innings but I want him to face against each single hitter, and get them out one by one. Then I'm expecting him to get the momentum of the game, not only him but the entire pitchers, as well.

Once again, I am saying I am not expecting him to pitch long innings, but to take it one batter at a time.

Q. Regarding Kondoh, your third hitter, he is hitless. By watching Kondoh hitting, how do you see him? And I think this situation, one base hit could save him. Do you do you feel about him struggling?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, well, his mentality is not down. As a ballplayer, yes, I agree that one single base hit will save him, but on the other hand, at the same time as a ballplayer, sometimes you have to have a rest. And as long as he is being healthy, I'm pleased.

Q. Looking back to the game against Australia, how do you see the ratio of the long ball through the games?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Well, it all depends on the ball flight by situation. If the ball angle was too high or if he hit very good, I can see the differences.

And by my impression of the Australian game, I don't think there's any bad things. But some of the hitters are swinging at the low pitches. My impression of Australia's game is the umpire didn't take the lower ball as pitches (strikes), so that was my impression.

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