

World Baseball Classic: Pool C - Czechia vs Japan

Tuesday, 10 March, 2026

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo Dome

Team Japan

Hirokazu Ibata

Postgame Press Conference

Japan 9, Czech Republic 0

Q. Early in the innings, the offense struggled a little bit, but overall, you beat them 9-0. What is your impression of the game?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Well, the starting pitcher and the opposing pitcher, they don't have a high fastball, not that much velocity, but they have a lot of changeup, and for the second pitchers, as well. But overall, I am so glad that we won by somehow.

Q. What was the most memorable moment of tonight's game? What did you learn from today's game?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Well, I would say all the pitching staff, all pitchers pitched so well, and we put Miyagi in between innings, and I also let Miyagi go for multiple innings, as well. As planned previously, we let Kitayama close. So that's something we earned tonight.

Q. Regarding the offense, Murakami hit a Grand Slam. How do you see your offense?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, finally, I was expecting him to hit one good one, and he did it. After we go to the states and we have a couple days to adjust, so I wish him more good condition.

Q. Now you fly to Miami to a different environment, how do you manage your team?

HIROKAZU IBATA: All the pitchers, all the hitters, we go for it as one team and we go all out.

Q. You've won four games of four in the pool and head to the knockout stage. Are you happy with how your team playing, and do you think you can keep going in the knockout stage?



HIROKAZU IBATA: Yeah, harding the quarterfinal, we don't go for the semifinal and the final. We only focus for the quarterfinal right now. And looking back at our previous four games, our first game, our offense did a great job and the league of tonight's game until the late inning, we were in a kind of tight game but the very last inning, our offense blew up, which is good.

Overall impression, all the pitchers pitched. It's something big to us.

Q. You don't put Ohtani in play. Is the intention of having Ohtani not playing, did you have any conversation with him?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Since he got here, we also have to manage him as a starting pitcher for the Major League Baseball season. Today is a day for him to be prepared for Major League Baseball as a starting pitcher. And we have to control his tiredness, as well, and today after the game, we have to fly to Miami long distance, so that's why we made a decision to not have him may tonight.

Q. You came out early when you became manager talking about how you wanted power on the team, and it's a little different from the standard Japanese small ball pitching and defense orientation. How has that thinking process developed for you as a manager?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, regarding tonight's game, Satoria we faced previous times. And early in the game, our offense struggled but the previous WBC quarterfinal, semifinal and final, a lot of extra bases like home runs affect the games. That was my impression and throughout my experience of Premier12, we gave up a very big earned run by giving up home runs.

So from now on as we go into the knock out round we will face tough opposing pitchers. I think one of the key is long hit extra-base hits. On the other hand, our pitching staff, don't be afraid to attack their strong money pitch, and these are the things I am thinking.

Q. In the previous four games, you have a lot of home



runs, effective home runs, as well. And regarding home runs by opponent hitters, is there any specific messages or is there any thought for your pitching staff?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Yes, I am more afraid to walk and then have men on base, extra base hits, that will hurt more. So I am asking all my pitchers, don't be afraid and attack the strike zone, and as a result if we walk them, that's fine but don't be afraid to attack.

Q. You start with leadoff Morishita and Sato, and you substituted Teruaki Sato after being hit by a pitch. How is Sato's condition?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Leading off with Morishita and batting Sato second, the aim is I want them to have as much at-bat as possible. And Morishita, he had a base hit tonight but still he has to work it out but the result of the hit, he made a big single and that meant a lot.

Regarding Sato, he is swinging very good. And regarding the hit by pitch, he wanted to go in the at-bat but just be safe, I sent him a pinch hitter. After the game when I talked and confirmed, Sato said he's okay. So after we fly to Miami, we'll see how his body reacts by tonight's hit by pitch.

Q. What great pitching, especially Takahashi and Kanemaru. How do you see that, and what your expectation for Takahashi and Kanemaru?

HIROKAZU IBATA: Regarding Takahashi, after he gave up the first base hit and he started pitching in the stretch, his velocity went out and after that velocity is good.

Regarding Kanemaru, Kanemaru was the last roster member due to the substitution replacement but still, Kanemaru did great pitching tonight.

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