

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Israel vs Venezuela

Saturday, 7 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Israel

Garrett Stubbs

C.J. Stubbs

Pregame Press Conference

Q. What does it mean to play with your brother in stage like in the WBC?

GARRETT STUBBS: We've talked about this quite a bit this week, which has been really fun for us, just to be able to talk about it. Obviously this week we'll actually get to do the playing. But it's probably anything that you would imagine, as well. I don't know if you have a brother or not, but those backyard games growing up as a kid, getting to actually do it on a stage that you dreamt about is a pretty incredible feat.

I think both of us have just discussed the backyard dream finally coming true on a big World Baseball Classic stage. It's pretty awesome.

C.J. STUBBS: We've played against each other a couple times now in the past couple years, and it's nice not having to root against him in these at-bats coming up.

GARRETT STUBBS: Even though I hit a homer.

C.J. STUBBS: He did hit a homer and everyone thought I told him the pitch, so that wasn't good. But yeah, it's a dream come true.

Q. I'm curious, how has it been the past couple weeks with your regular Spring Training duties and then having to learn about new pitchers, presumably you're not too accustomed to?

C.J. STUBBS: Yeah, I'm a part of a new organization this year with the Blue Jays, so I have a whole new crop of pitchers that I had to learn. Just getting to catch them one time, you get so much information. And then following into being with Team Israel, you've got a whole new crop of pitchers.

It's just really important to do your homework. Every pitch



you see from these guys, you just try to learn as much information as you can and let it lead you into the game.

Q. You're playing Venezuela today, has a lot of major league talent. What's the challenge of preparing for a team full of guys that you may already know versus when you play a team with fewer major league talent where you have to learn them for the first time?

GARRETT STUBBS: Yeah, no matter what, I'm sure the guys, whether they've been in the Big Leagues or not, if they're on one of these teams, they're probably pretty good. The limited information gets a little tougher.

In those situations you just lean on your pitching strengths. It happens in a season, too. We'll be in Philly and a guy will get called up to the Big Leagues and while there is still information on him, there's no major league information. So it can be a little bit more -- you've got to do a little bit more digging to see how they're going to get them out.

But in those situations you mostly just lean on your pitcher's strengths and hope that that's going to play.

Q. As Jewish Americans, can you talk about the pride you guys are feeling to put Team Israel on your chest and the star of David on your hat?

C.J. STUBBS: It's been incredible, especially just getting to meet people that grew up like you. We're probably the best Gaga players out there when they were five years old --

Q. Summer camp?

C.J. STUBBS: Exactly, and now being on the same baseball team, you just get to see where people came from, and now we're all together, and it's really special.

GARRETT STUBBS: Yeah, I'd just say that we're not necessarily known as the most athletic bunch. So getting to be on the same team on a field full of Jewish players is really fun, getting to know each other, getting to see the different backgrounds of where everyone grew up.



That's kind of the point of the whole World Baseball Classic, right? You get a group of people from all over the world playing on one stage and getting to grow the game together.

I think that that's going to be really fun to be able to be a part of that this week.

Q. 2017 is still the golden year of Israel baseball, and I know the team and Israel baseball is probably still living off that unbelievable run. What do you need to do to have a similar run this team?

GARRETT STUBBS: Sam Fuld would love to hear you say that. He's our GM over in Philly, too. And we've gone back and forth in '23 when I came and C.J. came to do the World Baseball Classic. It's pretty cool. They had the mensch on the bench that year, so maybe we need to bring that back for the magic.

Our team has been getting better every single go-around. Back in '23, I felt like there were a lot more Indy ball guys, maybe not as many names that you knew. But this go-round we've got Harrison Bader. Spencer Horwitz is back, Dean Kremer back again. And then we've added some extra pieces with Harrison Cohen, Max Lazar. So.

Some names -- and I know I'm not going to name all of them, but some names that you've seen around the league are now on our team, and I think we'll only just keep pushing forward with those kind of guys.

C.J. STUBBS: Yeah, and I think in this tournament style it really takes one swing, one big pitch and riding off that momentum. As early as we can get that going, it will help us propel into the next round.

Q. Why do you choose to represent Israel, and what does that mean to both of you?

GARRETT STUBBS: Yeah, I think for us, being Jewish was a huge part of our childhood. We both had bar mitzvahs, and this is the opportunity that we're given to be Jewish Americans and represent that heritage that we grew up with.

My mom was not bat mitzvahed, but she was the Jewish one in our family and my dad was actually raised Catholic. We did Christmas, we did Easter and the Jewish high holy days as well. We had a diverse upbringing. And being able to have an opportunity in the World Baseball Classic does that for us where we get to represent being Jewish and go out there and have some fun on a baseball field with other baseball Jewish Americans, so it'll be fun.

C.J. STUBBS: Yeah, I just remember showing up to Hebrew school in my baseball uniform and just looking back on those times and seeing how far we've taken being a Jewish American. And now playing in the WBC and working then and now, it's something special.

GARRETT STUBBS: I'm sure the other kids in class didn't like it when we showed up stinky and sweaty to Hebrew school.

Q. You've played in a couple World Series now. How would you say the WBC experience compares to it, and have you had a chance with connect with Dusty Baker at all?

GARRETT STUBBS: Yeah, the atmosphere is right next to it. Last time watching the Latin American countries play against each other, obviously those are some of the bigger games. Puerto Rico, Venezuela played against each other last time, DR was there, too. So those games, and you go into that atmosphere, if you were here last time, it is nothing short of a playoff Major League Baseball game, and it's awesome. It's great to see the pride people have in their countries and how motivated they are to come support that.

With regard to Dusty, C.J. saw him because C.J. played underneath Dusty, as well, and I haven't gotten to connect with him. I got to connect with Gary Pettis on the field the other day. But as soon as I run into Dusty, I will definitely be sharing some moments with him. He's one of, if not the best out there, obviously a Hall of Fame manager coming soon.

Q. C.J., what advice has Garrett given you in the lead-up to this tournament knowing everything this tournament represents and all of the emotions that come with it?

C.J. STUBBS: Yeah, I think the advice comes from watching him in those World Series and those playoff runs, because the intensity out there does get to that point. I actually had the chance to play in the third game in the 2023 WBC, so I felt it a little bit against the DR when we played against them.

It was a very quick transition going from Spring Training, driving down from West Palm Beach to Miami and getting thrown right into that game. So it was just playing off pure adrenaline. But yeah, I got to feel it a little bit then, just how intense each pitch and each moment is.

Q. How would you both evaluate this pitching staff and especially Ben Simon, the confidence to make him

a Game 1 starter?

GARRETT STUBBS: Yeah, we got to see him for the first time the other day, and he did great. He actually came off the mound shaking his head like he didn't like what the outing was, and he got one runner on base and had a one, two, three inning almost. He's got confidence. He likes his stuff.

I liked what I saw when I was out there. It was a bummer Robert Stock this time pitched the other day and won't be with us now. But it's fun to just see some of these new faces go out there and compete and watch them at this level, too. Obviously the exhibition games didn't have the atmosphere that this will, but it will be really cool to see some of those guys get out there in this atmosphere and compete.

Q. Your very custom chest protector is going to make a TV debut today. What was your level of involvement in designing it, and what was your thought process throughout that to whatever extent you were involved in that?

GARRETT STUBBS: Yeah, my involvement was actually zero, so there was no thought process on my end. But the Rawlings rep is Jewish, Steve Cohen. Believe it or not, he's Jewish. He designed the entire thing for me. So when I saw it in the mail and got to put it on for the first time, it was pretty special.

He also did a catcher's mitt for me, which you can't break in a catcher's mitt in a week, so that won't be used. But it was pretty cool when I saw it for the first time.

Q. Is that something you requested personally or they just gave it to you?

GARRETT STUBBS: We had discussed it. I didn't necessarily request it. He had brought it up and I was like, yeah, I would love to do that. He was very forward thinking on making that for me. I think he probably did some for other Rawlings guys, but yeah, pretty cool that they did that for me.

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