

World Baseball Classic: Pool D - Israel vs Netherlands

Tuesday, 10 March, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

LoanDepot Park

Team Israel

Manager Brad Ausmus

Assaf Lowengart

Pregame Press Conference

Q. So you won at least one game. You're certainly coming back in 2029. If you're going to lose tonight, this has been a successful season, it'll help you, you get more plays in, and Assaf, and to help grow the sport in Israel.

BRAD AUSMUS: Yeah. From that angle, I would say it was a success. But Israel has never won two games of the WBC, so we would like to do that as well. So just more credibility.

Q. You mentioned that winning two games would be great, but how much of tonight is just letting the guys go out there and have some fun? There is nothing really at stake to play for tonight. How much is about tonight having fun?

BRAD AUSMUS: You'd hope they have fun every time they go out there, but they're built to win games. So there can be games that are more stressful and games that are less stressful. This obviously falls in the latter, and it's easy to have fun, but it's also easy to lose your focus. So we'd like to get that second win.

ASSAF LOWENGART: Winning's fun.

Q. How cool was it to finally get in the game against Nicaragua and get to play in the outfield for a little bit?

ASSAF LOWENGART: Yeah, it was awesome. No Israel ballplayers have done it. You've just got to keep going.

Q. And Laquerica tonight is more of an opener situation or do you expect him to go multiple innings?

BRAD AUSMUS: Yeah, we're essentially going to use all available pitchers tonight to get through the game, so I would not expect him to go past two.



Q. I saw Garrett Stubs is not in the lineup. Is everything okay with him?

BRAD AUSMUS: Yeah, he was fine. He's caught two, and now CJ will catch two. And Garrett's available off the bench to do whatever we need.

Q. And for you personally, how cool has this whole experience been for you to be able to manage in the Baseball Classic?

BRAD AUSMUS: This has been a blast for me. I've thoroughly enjoyed it. We have a week-and-a-half with these guys, get to revisit with guys who were here in '23, meet some new guys that are on the team this year. It's been really fun.

I enjoyed it so much in '23. That's why I came back. I was probably going to come back Kinsler's bench coach. Kinsler was unable to manage. They asked me. I was on board from the get-go. I've enjoyed it. That's why I'm back. I'll thoroughly enjoy it again.

Q. Hey, Brad, can you just talk about your feelings? It's been a really intense week and a half. Your feelings of not just baseball, but your feelings of wearing Israel on your chest? Have they grown? Has your Jewish pride grown in the last week and a half?

BRAD AUSMUS: You know, I can go all the way back in 2012, the first time I managed in the qualifiers of the WBC for Israel. And it's grown, as has my relationship with some Israelis has grown. I've gotten to know more people, and as I've gotten to know more people it's grown with that. And in '23 there was a lot of pride involved, especially when we won the game against Nicaragua.

Again, same thing this year, although roller coaster because of the loss, win, loss, but it's -- I think there's no doubt that all the players and coaches, myself playing here with Israel across their chests probably deepens the connection they have to that country. I would be surprised if it doesn't across the board.



Q. And Assaf, how much have you heard from your friends back in Israel? Are they watching? Are they excited? What has this done for the sport of baseball in Israel?

ASSAF LOWENGART: Yeah, a lot of them watched. There's not much else they can do anyways but to watch something.

And the game yesterday was a good time for them. It was 12:00 o'clock, so it was around 6:00, 7:00 o'clock for them.

Yeah, a lot of them will at least watch the game. And Israeli baseball players watched the game, and they DMed me, sent me a private message saying how much it means to them. So hopefully they push their limits as well and continue playing baseball as long as they can, like I'm doing.

Q. You didn't answer my original question, Assaf. Do you think that the performance you've had so far as a team is going to help recruiting more Israelis, getting more Israelis in the sport so you won't be the only sapper on the team going forward?

ASSAF LOWENGART: Yeah. You always hope it creates a tension and hype around baseball, and hopefully in Israel they'll do a good job of keep pushing and riding that wave of hype towards all year and so on and create more opportunities for players and new players to come in. So I'm hoping.

Q. Outside of the competition aspect of this, playing in big games, what do you hope is the biggest takeaway for everybody on this team, just spiritually and just the experience as a whole? What is their biggest takeaway, do you think?

BRAD AUSMUS: I think it's going to be their connection to each other. I think these guys, when they cross paths in the future, there's going to be a connection because they played for this team, they played for Team Israel. And I think, like I mentioned, they're going to have a closer connection to Israel itself.

Q. Brad, for you, you know, in baseball, we're so used to the grind, 162 games. This is more -- we asked Andruw this. I'm curious to get your opinion. This is more of a sprint. And for the players on the team, specifically the younger players, what can they take from this experience that they can apply for their careers as they move forward?

BRAD AUSMUS: It's definitely a sprint. You play four teams, one game each. You have essentially three or four

days to prepare, you know, put all your bunt defenses, get your signs straight, your first and third defenses, and you have to do it on kind of a bare-bones basis because you're not going to have a bunch of time to rehearse or practice them.

I think the biggest takeaway for young players will be the atmosphere. You can't replicate the energy created in the stadium when there's 28-, 29-, 30,000 people. And for a lot of the young guys, they've never really experienced that.

Q. Among the players that were able to participate in the tournament so far for you guys, who has been the biggest surprise to you in terms of their performance?

BRAD AUSMUS: I mean, we've had a number. I mentioned Carrigg over the last couple of days. I can I think Noah Mendlinger is a guy that has swung the bat really well, makes a lot of contact. Zach Levenson is another guy.

So I think -- this is also for some players, not so much the Dominican team or the Venezuelan team, but if you're playing for Nicaragua or Israel, this is a little bit of a showcase for guys who are with organizations and of course for guys who are not within organizations.

(FastScripts by ASAP Sports)