

# World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals

Thursday, 12 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

## Team Canada

## Manager Ernie Whitt

## Michael Soroka

### Workout Day Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll welcome Team Canada to Houston, Michael and Ernie. We'll get started. Who has the first question?

**Q. Ernie, let's start with you. In 2006, Canada recorded their only win against the U.S. in WBC play. What stands out to you? Do you have particular memories of that game that kind of stands out to you when you think about it?**

ERNIE WHITT: The one thing I remember probably the most was Adam Loewen starting the game and the first time facing a lineup like that. I went out to him, first inning I think they had the bases loaded, and I think A-Rod or Chipper, one of the two, was coming up. And I said, "What are you going to do?" He said, "I'm going to get him out." He turned a double play, got out of the inning, and all of a sudden we start hitting the ball. It was a lot of fun. It was good.

**Q. The roster-talent gap between the U.S. and Canada in 2006, did that make the victory that more gratifying for you guys?**

ERNIE WHITT: Oh, absolutely. I don't know whether we had -- we might have had two or three big league players, maybe.

**Q. I think you had four or five.**

ERNIE WHITT: If we had that many, then we should have won. (Laughter).

I don't know. I just know that we looked across and saw a great U.S. team. I can't put it any better. They were very talented.

But I think we had more determination and fire in our gut that we were going to go out and play a great game



against them. Whether we won or lost, they knew that they were going to be in a battle.

**Q. Michael, you were I imagine eight or nine years old back in 2006 --**

ERNIE WHITT: Hey, I'm not that old. (Laughter).

**Q. Have you seen highlights? What have you been told? I can't imagine you remember too much about watching that particular game?**

MICHAEL SOROKA: What I remember is the highlights that they play every year at the Baseball Canada banquet. I get to see those over and over again. And they don't get old.

I think Ernie made a good point: We go play our game. We have a very talented lineup. I know a lot of those guys are excited about getting out of a park in Puerto Rico that was pretty well holding every ball in the park.

I think, again, just watching that game and watching the fire that those guys played with, it doesn't get old. So I think we're looking to do the same thing tomorrow.

**Q. Michael, your last outing against Colombia, how do you think that sets you up for tomorrow night, as far as -- I don't want you to give away any state secrets -- but as far as workload and how your overall body's feeling?**

MICHAEL SOROKA: Yeah, I feel good physically. I think it was a different game against Colombia because there were a lot of names in the lineup that I hadn't faced and a lot of names that we didn't have a ton of data on. And this is very much the opposite.

So we'll have a good idea. And it will be a little bit more of a chess match than that was.

I'm looking forward to it. I feel really good. We'll make the next step in a starting progression, obviously. I'm going to go out there with everything I've got for as long as I've got it.



**Q. There was a pretty exciting gold medal hockey game a couple weeks back. Sorry to bring it up, but do you feel a particular sense of pride in getting the chance to, I guess, avenge that?**

ERNIE WHITT: I think it would be great to avenge it. Let's put it this way, it was a great hockey game. Whether you won or you lost, it was a great hockey game.

MICHAEL SOROKA: I mean, obviously we're all aware of it. We all took a lot in the clubhouses during that game, the day after especially, and it would be nice.

But, again, we're not chasing results. We're not chasing a story. We're just going to go out there and play our brand of baseball and let everything fall as they may.

**Q. I know you were busy with your own games, but the way that Italy came out against the U.S. and kind of showed that a team can be beaten, does that give you guys any more confidence? I know you're confident in yourselves and you earned your way here. But just seeing that, what does that do for your guys?**

ERNIE WHITT: It doesn't do anything for us, I mean to be honest with you. We're going to go out and we're going to play the game we play it. We talk about playing clean.

I mean, in international baseball, if you make mistakes, it's going to cost you. And so we just try to play a clean game and play it the way that we play it with passion and pride, and play it until the end.

MICHAEL SOROKA: I think the same. I think in a one-game, anything can happen. We say it all the time. You see that at the end of the season sometimes with game 163, anything can happen in one game, especially with the wild card. So it's kind of like that.

Again, the roster gap isn't probably as big as it's been in previous years, and we're very fortunate to have a lineup like this and a pitching staff that has some depth.

Again, we're going to go give it everything we've got and, again, let it fall as it will.

**Q. Ernie, anything about 2013 and 2009, playing against Team USA, kind of sticks out to you?**

ERNIE WHITT: Well, 2009, we were in Toronto, if I'm not mistaken. I think I remember that. And it was like a championship feeling. I mean, the fans were excited. The whole city and country was excited.

And if I remember -- they beat us, but not by much, I don't

think so. I thought it was a pretty close game.

But again, you go out on the field, you go out to win. And you try to do everything you can to do that because every game is important.

**Q. Is there a fine balance between managing, say, for a pool-play type of contest as opposed to knockout stage? Is there a fine balance of maybe not being too aggressive, not aggressive enough? How do you view those two?**

ERNIE WHITT: Well, I view it the personnel that you have and you go with what they can do, what they're capable of doing and not capable of doing. So, again, if you've got an aggressive team, you want to play that way. You don't want to play defensive where I'm not going to try to be aggressive in this situation.

You've got to let the players play to their abilities. And I think if, as a manager, I try to take that away from them. I'm doing them an injustice.

I want them to go out and play, make the plays, have fun and see what happens in the end.

**Q. Ernie, I had a fun time calling your games in 2023 in Phoenix. I'm interested, since you've been there from the start, the biggest changes in this event, the World Baseball Classic, what have you seen from the very start to where it is in 2026?**

ERNIE WHITT: Well, I think there's more teams with better players now. I think the talent level is much better. I think there's more excitement. It's grown over the course of watching people going out and representing their countries.

And it's grown year by year or tournament by tournament. And this year, the response that was made in Puerto Rico, it was good. Well watched.

So I just think that the timing of it is not great, and I don't know whether we'll ever get to the timing of it. But anytime you have a so-called World Baseball Classic, you'd like to see it played as a true baseball game.

And I know hockey has gone to it now where they stopped their season for a little bit and played a true hockey series. Basketball, I believe, has done that now. I think it's time for baseball to do that.

Let's go where we don't have to have pitch counts and things like that is not really a true measure of what you have in your country and representing your country.

**Q. Michael, amongst the players, any cool bonding experiences, special moments away from the field that have made this whole experience the last couple of weeks special?**

MICHAEL SOROKA: Yeah, of course. I think being in Puerto Rico probably helped that a little bit, a little bit away from some of the facilities that some of us are used to all the time. We come back here and get this all now.

But it's a different experience when you get to have that commonality of putting your country across your chest and playing. There's a different pride that's just -- it's tough to find anywhere else.

And I think you see new guys that haven't been with the program before -- they were with the junior teams, first time with Canada -- or guys that are coming back out of retirement to play. Obviously we all saw what James Paxton did yesterday. And it just exudes confidence and helps all of us go out there and play loose and just have fun with this and be proud of the country that we get to represent.

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