

World Baseball Classic: Quarterfinals - USA vs Canada

Friday, 13 March, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

Daikin Park

Team USA

Manager Mark DeRosa

Aaron Judge

Postgame Press Conference

USA - 5, Canada - 3

Q. Mark, what can people expect from this coming up in the semifinal against Dominican Republic? And for Aaron, what does it mean for you as a player to be on this stage and to step up and play the semifinals against a team such as the Dominican Republic?

MARK DEROSA: First off, what a great game. Canada played hard. Great game all around.

What can we expect? An unreal environment, right? Ton of respect for their team. Ton of respect for Albert Pujols. He's an old teammate from 2009. So, yeah, I expect it to be like one of the best games of all time.

AARON JUDGE: The boys are excited, that's for sure. Definitely getting a taste for playoff atmosphere in March, definitely gets the juices flowing a little ability. But we're excited to hop on a flight to Miami and get this rolling.

We know what type of a team they've got over there. It's just an incredible offense, incredible pitching staff, bullpen. Everything is just top-notch. We're looking forward to it.

Q. How are you feeling going into the game against the Dominican Republic, knowing you have Paul Skenes on the mound?

AARON JUDGE: I like any game that Paul Skenes pitches. It's just incredible stuff. Watching him work on his craft the past couple weeks has been incredible. Seeing him in that game against Mexico, where it's an electric environment, he just toed the slab and went out and took care of business. It was really impressive.

Looking forward to seeing him get out there and do his thing. And then we hand it over to the bullpen of ours, it's going to be a tough fight. But definitely looking forward to



seeing him get back on the mound.

Q. The pitch limits expand to 95 in the semifinals and finals. How long of a leash is Paul going to have?

MARK DEROSA: Yeah, we'll talk about that. I would assume 75 to 80. I would assume that. I haven't talked to Andy Pettitte. We're so fired up to be getting on the plane to Miami, we haven't gotten that far yet.

Q. Your offense is some of the best hitters in the world. But they've sputtered here and there. What are your thoughts overall on how the offense is going? And how hard is it when you've got pitchers like tonight where you've never seen them before?

MARK DEROSA: Aaron can speak to facing guys he's never seen before. But, for me, we were just talking about it on the walk over, trying to get the offense rolling.

Listen, it's believe in the guys, bottom line. We have 14 position players in there. I truly believe in all of them. So I don't see any crazy changes taking place. We'll roll with the dudes.

Q. Aaron, what's the challenge of facing pitchers like minor league guys you've never seen before?

AARON JUDGE: Just feels like a travel-ball game. You've just got to go back out there and trust your instincts and trust your approach and just go to work.

I think the biggest thing is just communication. You see a lot of our guys after they get out they're going to the guy on deck just kind of talking about what they're seeing. I think little things like that go a long way.

So we just gotta keep up the communication. I think it's really just trusting your approach. Don't overthink it. We're playing the same game, doesn't matter if we have a scouting report or not. You just gotta go up there and hit.

Q. Aaron, can you speak to the offense tonight? They kept you guys in the yard, which is no small feat but you kept creating opportunities on the base paths and opportunities for yourselves.



AARON JUDGE: Yeah, if we're going to win this tournament, like we all believe we're going to, it's going to take more than home runs. If there's times where we're not getting home runs, we've gotta play small ball, we've gotta move runners, we gotta do different things just to create some offense.

Even there in the first inning, you see Bobby Witt gets on, we're second and third. And then Schwarbs comes up just put the ball in play you get a run. So I think it's going to at-bats like that through the rest of the tournament. They're big time. Because as this tournament goes on we're going to face better pitchers and a lot more Major League guys.

I think it's just trusting each other, and if we're not hitting homers then we gotta figure out ways to get runs like we did in the first.

Q. What do you think was the key to be able to shake off the disappointment of that last game and take care of business tonight to get to where you guys want to go?

AARON JUDGE: I think it's just a lot of belief in each other. There's a lot of noise that's been going on with that. And I think it just speaks volumes to the players in this room, the manager we've got, everybody that no matter what's being said about us, what's going on, we still got a job to do on the field.

So I think guys really locked in. We saw a different level of focus at our workout the other day and then even pregame today. It felt like the boys were locked and ready to go.

There's going to be a lot more noise as this thing goes on. And we just gotta keep playing our game.

Q. Mark, could you speak to the poise of your seventh, eighth and ninth inning relievers? And Aaron, what's it feel like having those guys be on the field in front of you?

MARK DEROSA: Speaking to seven, eight, nine, it's nice to call down to the bullpen and know you've got closers coming in in all three innings.

Bed was here in 2023 with me. So I know what's inside his heart. He's a gamer. And Garrett Whitlock is unbelievable, righty and lefty. And Mason Miller, we were talking about it on the walk down, that's the best fastball you're ever going to see.

So, yeah, it's nice to get in the bullpen and call David Ross

and know exactly where you're going.

AARON JUDGE: I think the biggest thing with that, too, it's all guys that have been in tough situations, tough games, and they always find a way to figure it out. We see it with Bednar, gets in a tough spot, but if you looked at our whole defense, we knew he was going to come through for us big time.

And Whitlock and Mason Miller, man, it's just -- they're surgeons out there. They're just hitting their spots. They're making their pitches. It's incredible to watch.

Just as a defense, it just allows us, hey, just make a play. We may not get too many plays, they're probably striking everybody out. But we're going to make a play when we get it.

Q. What was going through both of your minds in that inning -- second, third, nobody out, just two infield hits, but tough situation.

MARK DEROSA: A lot of belief in David Bednar. He's been in that situation before. Always seems to find a way to make a pitch in a big spot. Gets the pop-up. Gets the punch-out to Tyler O'Neill. And then battles against Owen Caissie, who has been swinging the heck out of the bat this entire tournament. Just a lot of belief in the guys.

Q. Aaron, I think it's fair to say you take a very business-like approach to baseball. The Dominican team is bat flipping, is taking photos in the dugout. It seems to be a different vibe than what Team USA has. When you see that in their style of play, what do you think of that?

AARON JUDGE: It's fun. It's exciting. I know the fans definitely love it. But I try not to look at what other teams are doing, what other people are doing. I'm focussed on what we've got here.

We've got a special group of guys that love to play this game. They're excited to be in this room. I know how they're all honored to be in this room, and they're not taking it for granted.

It's exciting to see what the DR is doing. It's been fun watching those games and seeing what's going on. I think everybody in that room is excited to get there and be a part of it.

Q. Aaron, you're playing against the New York Yankees players like Rosario, Wells, Doval. How do you feel with this opportunity and how do you describe the homer for Austin Wells today?

AARON JUDGE: Yes, I saw he had a nice homer today, which is good. On the Yankees side, it's good to see him rolling, doing his thing back there. But Team USA is excited to get to Miami and do our thing.

As much as it's fun seeing those guys and this and that, I've got USA on my chest. And I'm going to focus on those guys right now.

Q. Aaron, you touched on getting to play in kind of that playoff environment in March. What does that mean to you, and kind of how do the environments this week compare to other environments you've played in throughout your career?

AARON JUDGE: The game against Mexico was probably the best environment I've played in. It was a lot of fun, a lot of chanting, they're up standing on their feet, USA, Mexico, kind of going back and forth. It was an absolute blast.

Definitely, I think you see the emotion come out of guys in situations like that. So that's what you live for. That's what you dream of as a kid in your backyard playing Wiffle Ball getting an opportunity to play in front of some fans like that, an environment like that. So looking forward to more environments like that in Miami.

Q. You went through that in 2023 with the games in Miami. Do you think your game against Mexico helps these guys as far as they know that, hey, they're going to be the visiting team in that environment?

MARK DEROSA: Yeah, I definitely think so. I just think being familiar with the guys from an offensive standpoint is also going to help. I mean, listen, ton of respect. This game is going to be awesome to play against. There are superstars up and down both lineups. Pitching staffs. Like I said, ton of respect for Albert and what he's put together. I know Nelson Cruz, GM, former friend, former teammate of mine. So it's just going to be a spectacle.

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