

## Preview: The World Baseball Classic

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The first pitch of the World Baseball Classic is scheduled for Friday, March 3, at 11:30 AM at the Tokyo Dome in Japan. That means the tournament will be kicking off at Thursday March 2 at 9:30PM EST. Pool A of the tournament involves Korea, Japan, China and Chinese Taipei and runs March 3<sup>rd</sup> through March 5<sup>th</sup>.

Pools B, C, and D will all run the following week, March 7<sup>th</sup>

through March 10<sup>th</sup>

through March 10<sup>th</sup>

through March 10<sup>th</sup>

. Pool play will be round robin and you will play each team once. The top 2 teams from each pool will advance to round 2.

The United States team will be in Pool B, and will be joined by Mexico, Canada, and South Africa. These games will be split up between Chase Field, home of the Arizona Diamondbacks and Scottsdale Stadium, where many teams call home for their Spring Training. Ticket prices range anywhere from \$10.00 to 50.00 for Pool B play. Team USA will get on the field for their first game on Thursday March 7<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 PM. The Americans will be matched up against Mexico. Team USA will next take the field March 8<sup>th</sup> against

Canada at 2:00 PM. This will be followed by an off day, before playing their final game of the first round against South Africa on Friday.

Pool C will consist of Puerto Rico, Panama, Cuba and the Netherlands. Those games will be played from March 7<sup>th</sup> through March 10<sup>th</sup> at Hiram Bithorn stadium in Puerto Rico. Most will remember this stadium as the part-time home to the Montreal Expos in 2004. The highlight of this pool should come on the final day of pool play, when host Puerto Rico takes on the Cuban National Team at 7:30.

Finally, there is Pool D. Participants in this pool will be Venezuela, Australia, Italy and The Dominican Republic. This bracket will be played out at the Disney Wide World of Sports Stadium in Orlando, Florida over the same period as Pool B and Pool C. This pool gives us the best match up on the opening day of pool play with the Venezuela team playing The Dominican Republic on March 7<sup>th</sup> at 1:00PM.

Currently, these games are being advertised as being shown on the ESPN family of networks, with ESPNDeportes showing the most games. ESPN2 will be showing some of the preliminary round games from each pool. ESPN will be showing all the semi-final and finals action live. You can find the entire schedule and TV schedule at [World Baseball Classic: Schedule](#)

. I believe the TV schedule will be under constant pressure to show more games on the regular ESPN networks, depending on fan interest; so all schedules are subject to change.

The Cleveland Indians currently have 9 players from their organization scheduled to play. Indians playing for the Dominican Republic team are Jhonny Peralta, his double-play partner Ronnie Belliard and newly acquired reliever Guillermo Mota. Highlighting the Venezuelan team from the Indians will be catcher Victor Martinez. Joining Victor on the Venezuelan team will be reliever Rafael Betancourt and minor league outfielder Franklin Guterrez. Eduardo Perez, signed in the off-season,

will be on the Puerto Rico roster, along with relief pitcher Fernando Cabrera. Our old friend who has returned to the Tribe this off-season, Einar Diaz will be on the Panamanian roster.

Here are some of the rules, which teams in the WBC must abide by. Each team needed to submit a provisional roster, which had no real limits on it. Players could be on more than one provisional roster, which is what led to the Alex Rodriguez flip-flop debacle. Once the provisional rosters were set, teams have until 5 days before their first game to submit a 30-man roster. This 30-man roster is what you are taking to the dance with you. If a player gets injured in the tournament, you may petition for him to be placed on the disabled list. Once that permission is granted, that player can be replaced, but not until the start of the next round. Once you reach the semi-finals, no player may be replaced. The most important rules added for the WBC are to protect the pitchers. In round one, you are not allowed to start a new batter once you have reached 65 pitches. In the second round, that

increases to 80 pitches. For the semis and finals, you will be allowed to throw 95 pitches. Also, if you have thrown more than 50 pitches in a game, you are not allowed to pitch for four more days. If you throw between 30 and 49 pitches in a game, you cannot pitch the next day. Finally, no pitcher is allowed to throw three consecutive days, no matter what. There will also be a mercy rule for this tournament, and it will probably be used at least a couple of times. If you are leading by 10 or more after 7 innings, you win. If you are ahead by 15 after 5 innings you win. I definitely think the better teams will try to take advantage of this rule whenever possible. Could you imagine Team USA manger bunting someone over in the bottom of the 5<sup>th</sup> to scratch run 15 across the board and save his bullpen for another game!

In my opinion, the World Baseball Classic will be great for baseball. That is great for baseball in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela. Fans of these countries will take pride in the effort and results of their team. Maybe even

Australia, or Canada could pull off a couple of upsets and raise the notoriety of the game in their countries. I just don't think it is going to be all that big of a deal here in the US. Obviously ESPN isn't thinking too highly of the event either, which explains the questionable choice of ESPN Deportes as the main broadcast channel. Of course, you can pay MLB \$9.95 and watch all the games over your broadband Internet connection.

The second round of the tournament will be played just like round one. In the second round the pools are numbered instead of lettered, so the top 2 teams from Pool A and Pool B will combine into Pool 1 and play round robin. Pool C and Pool D will play round robin in newly formed Pool 2. Pool 1 should consist of Japan and Chinese Taipei advancing along with The United States and Mexico. Pool 2 is going to be loaded with possibly 3 of the 4 best teams in the tournament. Cuba and Puerto Rico should come out of Pool C, while The Dominican Republic and Venezuela will come out of Pool D. Round 2 games will be played at Angel

Stadium in Anaheim, California and Hiram Bithorn Stadium in San Juan Puerto Rico, between March 12<sup>th</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup>. In the semi-finals, the runner-up from Pool 1 plays the winner of Pool 1. This will pit Team USA against Japan at 7:00 PM at Petco Park in San Diego on March 18<sup>th</sup>. Prior to that game, the 2 best teams in the tournament will match up in the other semi-final when the loaded pitching staff of Venezuela matches up against the lethal line up of the Dominican Republic at 3:00 PM in San Diego.

This will bring us to the Championship Game of the inaugural World Baseball Classic, and will have Team USA playing the Dominican Republic on Monday March 20<sup>th</sup>. This is the game everyone wants to see. This game would have the most stars from the Major Leagues. Again, since final rosters do not have to be set for a couple more days, this could change as people change their mind. However this could be the potential starting lineups for this game:

## Team USA

**Johnny Damon CF**

**Derek Jeter SS**

**Alex Rodriguez 3b**

**Mark Texeira 1b**

**Ken Griffey Jr. LF**

**Derek Lee DH**

**Chase Utley 2b**

**Vernon Wells RF**

**Jason Varitek C**

# Roger Clemens

## SP

# Dominican

# Republic

# Rafael

**Furcal SS**

**Alfonso**

**Soriano 2b**

**Albert Pujols**

**1b**

**David Ortiz**

**DH**

**Vlad**

**Guerrero**

**RF**

**Aramis**

**Ramirez 3b**

**Willy Mo**

**Pena CF**

**Moises Alou**

**LF**

**Miguel Olivo**

**C**

# Bartolo Colon SP

Now those  
are near

All-Star  
capable  
lineups for  
both teams.  
Most people  
will only

watch the  
finals on  
ESPN, if  
this is the  
match up.  
This is not

the year for  
this event to  
have  
upsets. Its  
only shot at  
success is

to have a  
Champions  
hip Game  
with these  
stars  
involved.

As for who  
will win?

Team USA

7

Dominican

Rep. 6

# WP – Roger Clemens

LP -

# Bartolo Colon

S – Joe

# Nathan

HR's USA-  
Texeria,

# Utley, Dominican- Ortiz, Pujols