THE BIG APPLE: JUDGE HEADLINES TEAM USA'S NEW ERA AS KNICKS SEARCH FOR STABILITY.

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Late February marks the start of full spring training, with teams across Major League Baseball back on the field preparing for the new season. Aaron Judge and the Yankees are getting their bats back in shape, putting up a 20-spot against Detroit. The Judge hit his two home runs of spring training in the game.

The captain for Team USA is looking forward to the World Baseball Classic (WBC) this March.

"We've got the WBC coming up, which I'm excited about, and an exciting Yankees season," Judge said postgame.

The USA lost to Japan in the championship game in 2023. Notable New York names competing for the United States in this year's WBC are Mets' pitchers Clay Holmes and Nolan McLean.

Other New York players in the WBC are Austin Wells, Camilo Doval, Amed Rosario and their captain, Juan Soto, for the Dominican Republic.

The WBC kicks off on March 4 with Chinese Taipei and Australia from Tokyo, Japan. Team USA opens its revenge tour against Brazil on March 6 in Houston, Texas.

What can we expect as an outcome from the WBC? Expect the USA to take down Japan in the championship. Why? Team USA's roster looks stronger than ever, with new stars Paul Skenes, Bobby Witt Jr., Pete Crow-Armstrong and Tarik Skubal set to make their World Baseball Classic debuts. Surprisingly, this is Aaron Judge's first WBC. The three-time MVP decided not to play in the 2023 WBC and instead focused on his new captain role for the Yankees. This year, the Judge is all-in for his country.

Switching gears to basketball, the New York Knicks have been up and down as of late. They were bullied by Detroit once again, this time at Madison Square Garden. Cade Cunningham proved that he should be in the MVP conversation, putting up 42 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists. Cunningham got everywhere he wanted, toying with Knicks' defenders all night. The Pistons have swept the season series against New York, with a +84 point differential.

Changes need to happen if the Knicks want to stand a chance against Detroit when they face each other in the playoffs. We saw the same last season in the Boston playoff series, where they swept the Knicks in the regular season, yet New York won the series in six games. Hopefully, the same will happen in these playoffs for the Knicks.

The Knicks were throttled by Cleveland on Tuesday night; another playoff team, the Knicks didn't have any threat against for the entire game. Yes, however, the Knicks did beat Houston in a miracle type of comeback down as much as 18 points in the fourth quarter.

Jalen Brunson was nowhere in the loss to the Cavs, shooting an abysmal 6/19. When Brunson is off, the whole team is off. It's yet again another season where the Knicks rely on Brunson and nobody else. Karl-Anthony Towns is having a down year as well. New York didn't trade for KAT for no reason.

I do want to be optimistic and say the Knicks are still ramping up for the playoffs, but having performances where it looks like the team missed the bus to the arena is unacceptable. Look at teams like Detroit, Oklahoma City and San Antonio. Those teams feed off one another. They are so well built; everyone is on the same page night in and night out. There have been a few times this season where we've seen that from the Knicks. New York doesn't seem to click like the other powerhouse teams in the league.

Is it a coaching issue? Is it a player issue? It needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. It won't be pretty for Knicks fans if they make an early exit in what is supposed to be a long playoff run this season.



The New York Knicks playing against the San Antonio Spurs on Sunday, March 1. The Knicks won the game 114-89. PHOTO COURTESY OF @NYKNICKS ON INSTAGRAM

PREVIEWING THE NEW YORK YANKEES PARTICIPATING IN THE WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC

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With the sixth World Baseball Classic set to begin on March 5, some Yankees players have already left spring training to prepare for the 12-day tournament.

Here are the 10 players from the New York Yankees 40-man roster who are set to appear in the WBC and the roles they may fill for their countries.

Aaron Judge

Judge will captain Team USA, taking over for Mike Trout. Judge is off to a hot start this spring, hitting two home runs in his first contest of exhibition play.

Leading a power-packed lineup featuring four top four MVP finalists from 2026, Judge will sit in the heart of a U.S. order surrounded by Kyle Schwarber, Bobby Witt Jr. and Cal Raleigh.

David Bednar

Bednar returns for his second WBC. The right hander will pair up with San Diego Padres closer Mason Miller out of the back of the bullpen to form an elite one-two punch.

Bednar was traded to the Yankees last season on deadline day from the Pittsburg Pirates and 10 of 13 in save opportunities with a 2.19 ERA after the move.

Paul Goldschmidt

Goldschmidt is an elder statesman of the USA roster, serving as the oldest member of the team and one of only two remaining players from the 2017 WBC title team, alongside Alex Bregman. In fact, 21 players from that 2017 squad have since retired from professional baseball.

Once an MVP-level player, Goldschmidt is in the twilight of his career and will serve as a platoon option to face southpaws and as veteran leadership in the clubhouse. The right-handed hitter posted a .981 OPS against lefties with New York in 2025.

Jazz Chisholm Jr.

Chisholm, who recently told Yankees media that he believes he has 50-50 potential, will serve as co-captain of Team Great Britain alongside Washington Nationals catching prospect Harry Ford.

Chisholm is one of four Bahamians suiting up for GB. The second baseman carries the most major league pedigree of any player on the roster and will be a linchpin in a lineup looking to advance past pool play for the first time ever.

It is the first time the 28-year-old has suited up for GB since the 2016 World Baseball Classic qualifiers, when he was just 18 years old.

Chisholm will be joined by major league field coordinator and director of catching Tanner Swanson, who will serve as bench coach, and minor league pitcher Brendan Beck.

Camilo Doval

Doval will suit up for the Dominican Republic for his second WBC. In the 2023 WBC, his first tournament appearance, the power pitcher threw two and a third innings of shutout baseball.

The right-hander will battle new Chicago White Sox set-up man Seranthony Domínguez and Kansas City Royals closer Carlos Estévez for late inning opportunities.

Amed Rosario

Joining Doval on the DR squad, Rosario will largely be blocked for playing time by a combination of Junior Caminero, Ketel Marte and Manny Machado at second and third base. While Rosario will likely spend most of the tournament watching from the bench, it wouldn't be a surprise to see Rosario make an appearance in pool play.

The clearest path to playing time may be in the corner outfield. Julio Rodríguez has never appeared away from center field in the majors, and Oneil Cruz hasn't played in the corner outfield since a single game in 2022. Both are likely only options up the middle. Rosario is a better hitter than defensive specialist Johan Rojas and could spell former Yankee Juan Soto or Fernando Tatis Jr. against a tough righty should one need a day off.

Austin Wells

Wells rounds out the Yankee representation on the DR roster and will battle with a former Yankee prospect for playing time.

Agustín Ramírez was traded to the Miami Marlins in the deal that brought Chisholm to New York. Though Ramírez hit 21 home runs in his rookie season, Wells is a far better defender and could draw the bulk of the work as the tournament progresses.

Though he was born in Scottsdale, Ariz., Wells is eligible to play for the DR as both of his maternal grandparents were born there.

Fernando Cruz

Cruz will serve as the set-up man for three-time National League Reliever of the Year Edwin Díaz on Team Puerto Rico. It will be his second WBC, as he made three appearances and one start for Puerto Rico in the 2023 tournament.



The New York Yankees playing against the Philadelphia Phillies on March 1, 2026. The Yankees defeated the Phillies 5-3.
PHOTO COURTESY OF @YANKEES ON INSTAGRAM

The 35-year-old has already made three scoreless appearances this spring, punching out three.

Elmer Rodriguez

The most notable Yankees prospect slated to appear in the tournament, Rodriguez will join Cruz on a Puerto Rico pitching staff that lacks established major league starting experience beyond Royals starter Seth Lugo. Rodriguez stands as the highest upside option of the group, throwing three scoreless innings in the Yankees' spring opener against the Baltimore Orioles to start his season.

The 22-year-old right hander was traded to New York prior to the 2025 season and spent his first season in the organization across three levels, working to a 2.58 over 150 innings and earning a spot on MLB Pipeline's top 100 prospect list at No. 82.

José Caballero

Caballero is one of the higher profile members of Team Panama and will likely get first cracks at the starting shortstop position, one that he will also fill on Opening Day for the Yankees.

Caballero is another player participating in his second career tournament. The utilityman slashed .231/.333/.308 across 15 plate appearances in pool play 2023.

Brad Ausmus

The current bench coach for the Yankees, Ausmus will manage Team Israel after coaching on the team in 2023 under Ian Kinsler. The two-time big-league manager will be joined by Yankees pitching prospect Harrison Cohen.

Ausmus is a member of National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

Note: Ryan Yarbrough was added to the Team USA roster to replace the injured Joe Ryan after this article was written.