The World Baseball Classic delivered and left everyone wanting more

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

Seattle Mariners third baseman Eugenio Suarez stepped to the plate at the top of the ninth inning on March 17 in Miami with the World Baseball Classic championship tied 2-2 and Venezuela one hit away from history.

He ripped an RBI double, Chicago Cubs pitcher Daniel Palencia retired the U.S. and for the first time in the WBC's history, Venezuela held the trophy. The final score was 3-2. Kansas City Royals infielder Maikel Garcia was named tournament MVP. Venezuela declared the following day a national holiday.

That was the ending two weeks of outstanding baseball built toward.

The tournament ran from March 5-17 across Tokyo, San Juan, Houston and Miami. This year, the WBC was loaded with the kind of star power that used to be treated like a wish list. All four reigning MVPs and Cy Young winners were placed on rosters. A record 78 MLB All-Stars were included. Attendance reached 1,619,839, topping the previous tournament record from 2023, and the championship game drew 10.784 million viewers, the most-watched WBC telecast ever. Through the semifinals, official WBC social media content had already generated more than 2.24 billion views worldwide.

What makes the WBC different from an MLB exhibition is that the talent pool extends well beyond major league camps. The tournament sources players from professional leagues worldwide, not just MLB organizations.

A fan can watch big league stars, NPB standouts from Japan, KBO talent from South Korea, and players shaped by other national systems all compete in the same event. That is what gives the event a true world-championship feel rather than just a novelty.

Still, the event was not given a full runway. Because the WBC continues to be played during spring training, players are taken away from camp, pitchers are managed under tight restrictions and every roster decision is reevaluated amid injury fears. Official 2026 rules capped pitchers at 65 pitches in pool play, 80 in the quarterfinals and 95 in the championship round, with mandatory rest requirements layered on top.

Venezuela manager Omar Lopez felt the tension the morning of the championship game. After leaning heavily on his bullpen to beat Italy the night before, Lopez woke up to text messages from three separate MLB clubs telling him not to use their relievers on back-to-back nights. Lopez still had to figure out how to win a title with a staff that had already thrown 23 outs against Italy, knowing a handful of those arms were off the table.

MLB contracts are fully guaranteed, so clubs avoid paying for injuries in games that don't affect standings. The shadow of New York Mets pitcher Edwin Díaz tearing his patellar tendon during the 2023 WBC celebration remains. In 2026, insurance issues kept key players off rosters, especially hurting Puerto Rico. The tournament had stars, but not the complete potential of each team.

Even though limits protect players and make participation realistic for clubs in March, these limits also flatten the product. Managers must consider pitch counts, rest and insurance before fielding their best team. This tension led MLB commissioner Rob Manfred to suggest a future midseason WBC, when clubs might be less restrictive.

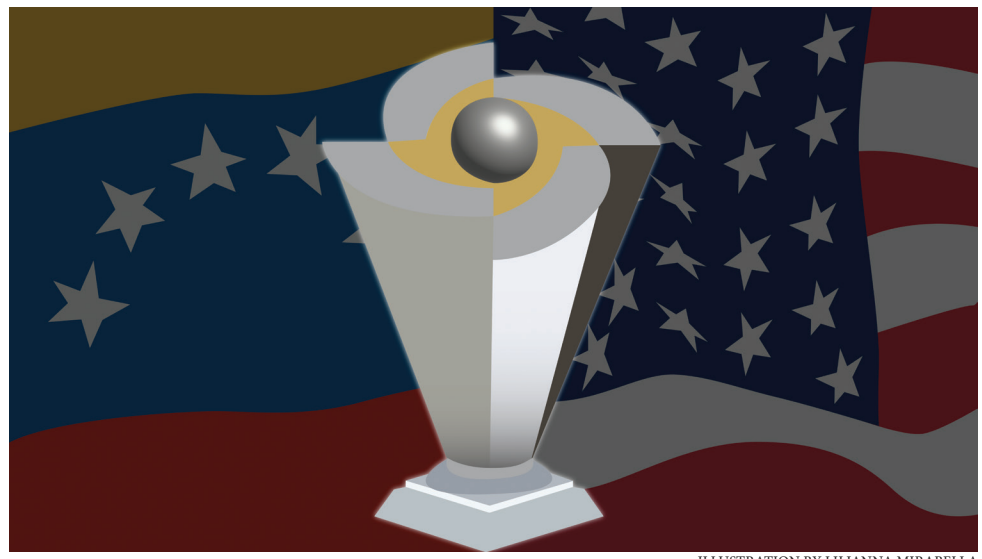

ILLUSTRATION BY LILIANNA MIRABELLA

However, the WBC's growth this year was most felt in Venezuela, where the tournament wasn't just won but absorbed into national life. The celebration that followed reached far beyond Miami. Before the last pitch was even thrown, Chicago Cubs relief pitcher Daniel Palencia was crying on the mound before striking out Red Sox outfielder Roman Anthony.

The emotions were shared by multiple players on the team, including Atlanta Braves outfielder Ronald Acuna Jr., who had a classic moment against Japan, the defending champion, which was eliminated in the quarterfinals by Venezuela, Japan's worst finish in program history.

The game opened with arguably the best individual sequence the WBC has ever produced. Acuna and Los Angeles Dodgers designated hitter/starting pitcher Shohei Ohtani combined to hit leadoff home runs in the first inning.

The two players have combined to win the last three National League MVP awards, and watching them trade blows before a single out was recorded set the atmosphere for everything that followed. Venezuela came back from a 5-2 deficit, with Red Sox outfielder Wilyer Abreu launching a three-run shot off pitcher Hiromi Ito, to take the lead for good in the sixth. Six Venezuelan relievers then held Japan scoreless the rest of the way.

The same tournament also said something meaningful about other countries that did not leave with the trophy. Italy became the surprise of the bracket by upsetting Team USA, winning Pool B 4-0 and reaching the semifinals for the first time.

So this year's WBC proved that the tournament's legitimacy is no longer in question. The WBC has drawn record crowds, and the players are still wearing the jerseys despite the risk of injury, proving that the whole world feels united by our simple love of baseball.

The debate is whether baseball is ready to let the tournament become the global platform it appears to be.

Bleachers 'kills the bots'

By AVA HIGHLAND
News Editor

Wednesday morning I was ready. Reminders set, computer charged, credit card out. I was preparing for battle, and by that, I mean a presale on Ticketmaster.

At 10 a.m. March 18, the presale for rock band Bleachers' summer 2026 tour, "Bleachers Forever" went live.

I was expecting the usual routine for a presale: A spot in the queue consisting of at least five numbers, little to no tickets, high prices.

But in a shocking turn of events, this was not the case.

The clock hit 10 a.m. and the queue started. I quite literally jumped when I entered the queue and my starting spot was 113. By 10:01 a.m. I was in. At 10:07 a.m. I texted my mom I got the tickets. And the prices? Affordable.

A few years ago, however, I had quite a different experience than this year. During a previous presale for Bleachers, not only did I try to get tickets, but so did my mom and my dad. Needless to say, I didn't attend that concert. Between presale bots and resale sharks, it seemed pretty impossible. And that's usually the case across the board.

But this year, it wasn't by luck. This was the result of an artist not only recognizing the problem, but also taking measures before a sale and truly caring for their fans.

Bleachers announced their "Bleachers Forever" tour on March 10, and since then, lead vocalist Jack Antonoff has made it abundantly clear that he was not messing around.

"ONLY MY PEOPLE CAN SEE ME," Jack wrote in the announcement.

A few days later, on March 13, Bleachers announced the tour's venues along with the measures they took to make sure only their people can see them.

"We have worked our asses off to eliminate bullshit and get bleachers forever tickets to you at face value," Antonoff wrote.

Fans signed up for the specific shows they wanted to go to, which gave Bleachers "the ability to kill as many bots and bastards as possible."

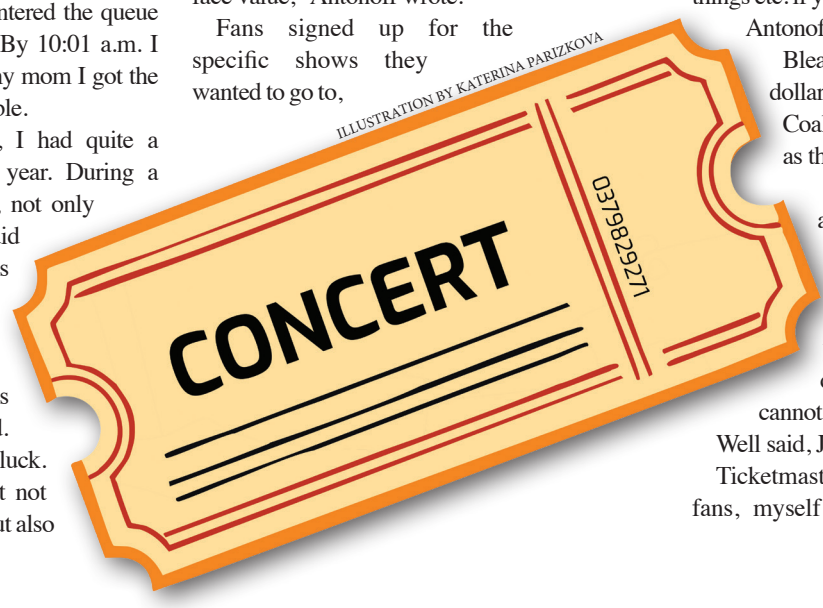

ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

And it worked.

Even hours later that evening I went back to the sale out of curiosity and found several tickets still remaining.

The band sold their tickets at face value and kept their concert affordable, something rarely found today.

"We will be selling no tickets at absurd prices, so if you see that, you are in the wrong place," Antonoff wrote.

And only tickets were sold.

"Zero vip crap, no fast pass stuff, no bundle things etc. if you see that it's not us and isn't real," Antonoff wrote in another post.

Bleachers will also be donating one dollar from each ticket to the The Ally Coalition to support LGBTQ+ youth, as they do at all their shows.

"We want to have an on sale with as much dignity as possible and do everything we can to make sure our people get tickets at the price that we set," Jack wrote. "Love you all very much. You know how deep this is for me. The band and I cannot wait to be with you soon."

Well said, Jack.

Ticketmaster has a long history of upsetting fans, myself included on several occasions. And in many of these instances of bots and absurd prices, artists have called out the ticket selling platform.

Like last fall for instance, tickets for singer Olivia Dean's "The Art Of Loving Live" tour went on sale and prices reached insane numbers.

Dean called out the ticket platforms urging them to do better.

"Ticketmaster and AXS have agreed to refund the difference to anyone who has paid over face value for a ticket and will cap all future ticket resale prices to face value for the North American run of the tour," Dean wrote in an Instagram story post. "Thank you for your patience and I'm looking forward to seeing all you real humans at the show."

Fans trying to purchase tickets for singer Ariana Grande 2026 "Eternal Sunshine" tour experienced the same frustration.

"Hi my angels, I have been on set all week but I wanted to let you know that what's been happening with the secondary ticket resellers has been brought to my attention and of course I am incredibly bothered by it," Grande wrote in an Instagram story post.

But unlike Bleachers, these instances all came after the fact.

Ticketmaster might never fix its issues itself, but the artists that really care will. So thank you Bleachers, for embodying the real meaning of live music.