

MLB Winter Meetings

Monday, December 5, 2022

San Diego, California, USA

Texas Rangers

Bruce Bochy

Press Conference



Q. What have you been up to?

BRUCE BOCHY: What have I been up to? Before taking this?

Q. Since.

BRUCE BOCHY: It's been busy. Spending a lot of time with C.Y. and our front office, trying to put the staff together and some things that we need to do. A lot of meetings. A lot of meetings with free agents it's been busy. And it's been a good busy. I've enjoyed it.

And it's good to be back in the dugout. It's good to be back in the fire.

Q. Does it help you realize how much you missed it?

BRUCE BOCHY: It does. To be honest, you know in the first year I was fine. I was all right. Then it started getting a little worse. But now that I'm doing it, you do realize how much you miss it and how much fun so many different parts of the game bring to you.

The game itself it's obvious, but I mean this part of it, even the Winter Meetings, but the meetings, talking about players and getting players signed, things like that, just putting the team together, the staff together. This is part of what you miss as far as being in the game, managing, so it's good to be back.

Q. Can you take us through a little bit what took place from your perspective on Thursday and Friday in regards to deGrom?

BRUCE BOCHY: Now, you're talking before our meeting, right? But C.Y., he called me and said, you know, that Jacob has a lot of interest in coming here.

And you're excited about that, but you still don't know where it's going to go. And then the next day he called me and he starts talking. And then he finally said, we got him. We got Jacob.

And euphoria hits at that point. I couldn't have been more thrilled, more excited that we were able to bring him here. And I'm thankful -- first of all, to Jacob for coming to Texas, but also for C.Y., ownership, step up the way they did to get a guy that was very much a need for us, a guy that's going to head up this rotation. You're talking one of the best pitchers in the game.

For him to be leading the way was a big need for us. And it makes our club so much better when you get a player like this. And so I couldn't have been happier.

Now, it's a very, very good couple of days, because I had a ton of phone calls about it. And it's real exciting stuff. You just don't know, when these meetings start happening, your chances of landing your guy. But it happened pretty fast for us.

Q. Seems like (indiscernible) got him would have been something that C.Y. should have led with. Was he stonewalling you beforehand?

BRUCE BOCHY: With Jacob?

Q. You said he talked a little bit and then just came out with "we got him." (Indiscernible)?

BRUCE BOCHY: You know what, we had a really good Zoom meeting, I thought, before Thanksgiving. And so just talking to him -- I had met Jacob earlier. Going back 2015, he pitched me for me in the All-Star Game in Cincinnati. And so that's the first time I met him.

I've always admired him. But when we had a chance to talk to him, it just gives you a better idea who the man is. And so I felt good about it. But you realize a lot of clubs are going to talk to the man. So you still don't know where you're at, as far as what his thoughts are.

But he made up his mind pretty quick. And he's just excited everybody. I can tell you, the front office. I know Ray Davis was very excited about it, too. All of us.

And you still feel the residual of signing somebody like this. It just does a lot for the other players. Hey, we mean business right now. I mean, we're trying to get back to

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

contending and bringing winning baseball back to Texas.

Q. You've had other opportunities. What pushed this over the top, the Rangers job?

BRUCE BOCHY: Really I haven't. It's not like I went out and I've talked to clubs or anything. So I think it starts with -- C.Y. and I had a connection because he pitched for me. And we've run into each other, with him staying in baseball. And then when he called and he wanted to get my appetite on doing this, sure, it piqued my interest.

And then he came out, and we talked for seven hours. By the time he left, I knew this is what I wanted to do and what I probably should be doing.

There's a right time and place for certain things, and this certainly felt that way for me coming to Texas. I said, for me to do this, I had to feel like it was the right fit. And I certainly felt that. So anyway, that's why I'm here.

Q. When he came out to you talk to you, did he give you a sense of how aggressive the Rangers were going to be? Obviously they were aggressive last offseason and now getting deGrom?

BRUCE BOCHY: He did. When you talk to C.Y., he's committed. He's got a real passion for trying to build a winning culture in Texas. He's from there. He's from the Dallas area. It means a lot to him. It means a lot to improve the ballclub for the fans and get back to playing great baseball and hopefully getting back to postseason and eventually hopefully winning a championship.

And he doesn't hold back on it. And you feel the passion. You can sense it, his drive to get this done. And it inspires you. I'll be honest. And it certainly did me.

Q. What about his vision in terms of, I know you wanted to come back, but I assume you were given assurances that we're also going to have a chance to win, or you wouldn't have come back --

BRUCE BOCHY: Right. And these are things that we talked about. And Mr. Davis came out a couple days later, Ray Davis, our owner. And so these are things we discussed and their vision, on what they needed to do to get back on track.

It wasn't that long ago where the Texas Rangers were playing really good baseball. I think both of them had enough of some of these tough years. And so they're doing all they can to get this club back on track. And it was just something that excited me. I wanted to be a part of it because you could see that they were ready to give us the

tools to help this happen.

Q. How does Mike Maddux, the addition of him, fit into all of this?

BRUCE BOCHY: Huge. I mean, he's got history there. He had success there. He's had success wherever he's gone. Mike, he's just considered one of the best pitching coaches in the game. And with his experience, knowledge and his success, this is just a great fit.

A great fit for me, too. A great fit for the pitching staff. And to hear his voice, it's been, to be honest, a little bit of a struggle, getting that pitching developed in Texas.

And so we got him leading the way now. And he's a difference-maker. And I'm really, really looking forward to working with him.

Q. How do you align philosophically you and Mike?

BRUCE BOCHY: Very similar, very similar. We balance the information, the data. But we also believe in trusting our eyes and also staying with some things that you need to stay with in baseball. And those are the basics -- fundamentals, things like that, throwing strikes, fielding your position -- things that are very important, playing winning baseball. So we're very aligned with that.

Q. What else do you think you need there?

BRUCE BOCHY: What else do we think we need? We're still looking to do some things to even make us better. I think you've heard maybe another bat. If it makes sense out there somewhere. Even on the pitching side. So it's not like we're done. So I think those are our priorities right now.

Q. So you were still consulting for the Giants before you took this job. Was that your --

BRUCE BOCHY: Yes.

Q. When you went to them and told them what you were going to do, what was their reaction?

BRUCE BOCHY: I didn't go to them.

Q. You didn't tell them you were taking a new job?

BRUCE BOCHY: No, Texas called and asked for permission. But I did talk to Farhan, but I didn't go to them. So that's how that worked.

Q. You haven't talked to them since?



BRUCE BOCHY: No.

Q. In that Zoom with deGrom before Thanksgiving, what did you take out of it in terms of what he was saying? And maybe what message did you want him to get from you?

BRUCE BOCHY: I think what I got from him is you know how really committed he was to playing on a winner -- I think he liked the fact that we were in the process of building a winning culture in Texas.

A very humble man that wants to -- he just wants to pitch. And a guy that also wants to be a good teammate, that was excited to listen to what we had to offer him.

For me, again, when you are in that conversation, again, you don't know where you're at or where you stand. But the fact that he and his wife, Stacey, they showed a tremendous interest in what we had and possibilities of what could happen with Texas baseball.

Q. When Chris came, Chris Young came to your house and Ray Davis came to your house, the sales pitch, that totally makes sense. But I'm curious what questions did you have for them that you were content that it was the right fit for you?

BRUCE BOCHY: My questions probably more than anything was really what their vision was. That was important to me on where they thought they stood, on what they were looking to do.

It's a tough division. They have the best team in baseball there, the World Champions. Got Seattle.

But they've had a couple difficult years, let's be honest. And so that was important for me to kind of hear what their plan, their vision was to help get this turned around.

Q. Was there anything specific -- I know you mentioned that they want to win, that they're pushing, building towards a winner -- but was there anything specific about their vision that they told you that was, okay, that's it, we're good?

BRUCE BOCHY: You know, I think the biggest thing we talked about was we had to improve the starting pitching. I mean, that's where it starts. You have to throw, you gotta catch it, and that's probably never going to change, and certainly won't with me.

So that's where we had to really get better and get some experience out there, some winning attitude.

Sometimes when you have some difficult years, the last part of that process is believing you can win. And that's what has to happen now. And that's going to be part of my job and coaching staff's job.

Q. The issues that have come up in recent years, especially in terms of veteran managers is the discussion of where the dividing line is between the front office's role and the manager's role. Did you have to have any kind of conversation with them on that topic?

BRUCE BOCHY: It wasn't what I brought up, but it was discussed because it might have been a concern. But it's all about working together. I can work with anybody as long as we're working together.

Analytics, you have to be open minded. You want all the information you can get. It's so valuable. But also I think it's important that you have the freedom to do some things that make sense to you. And so it's putting both sides together, as they say, a marriage of both.

And so, sure, we talked about it because I don't want them to think that I'm old school and I'm not open minded to anything. I've always used analytics. I go back to San Francisco. I even go back to my early days in San Diego. It's just part of the game.

It's just now there's so much more of it. And so I think they wanted me to make sure that they understand that and every decision is not going to be driven by analytics.

Q. Does anything get rusty a few years away or have you just done this way too long for that ever to be the case?

BRUCE BOCHY: I don't know. That's a good question. I'll find out. I'll get spring training to chip off some of it. But I've watched a lot of games. I'm like you guys -- why is he doing this or doing that.

But there's been some rule changes. There's some things I've got to catch up with -- the rules, the analytics, things like that that I'll be working on to make sure I'm up to date with everything.

Q. Were there any of the new rule changes that will be taking effect next year that really caught your attention and seemed like an adjustment for you?

BRUCE BOCHY: Well, I mean, they all kind of catch your attention because you've done things so long that a rule change is always going to raise some eyebrows, I think.

But the pace of game, that is going to be an adjustment for a lot of players. And I saw it in Las Vegas. I've seen it work, though. It's pretty good.

Las Vegas, I don't know if you've ever seen a game there, I think it's like 14-10 and the game was under three hours. It was amazing the pace.

And I'm a big pace guy, anyway. Even without the clock, I believe in it. And I think it's good for the pitchers. It's good for the infielders. So I'm good with that.

The throw-overs, that's changing strategy a little bit. Stepping off and throwing over a couple times and you're in a box a little bit.

So these are things that I think about. The bases, I'll be honest, I don't know how big a difference it's going to make. It may make them try to be more aggressive. But I think you'll see pitchers get quicker to home plate, things like that.

But, hey, doesn't matter if you like them or not you've just got to make them work and make them work the best you can.

Q. Are you looking forward to 14 games against Phil Nevin?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah, Nev, he's already called me a couple times on that. Yeah, you know what? I'm happy for him. I really am, that they kept him and he's there and he'll do a great job for them.

Q. When you (indiscernible) deGrom, going back Giants days and Padre days, you were the happiest since when? What free agent that you guys got, either in San Diego or San Francisco, or some big trade?

BRUCE BOCHY: One that comes to mind right away is Kevin Brown. I'll never forget when we got him in '98 in San Diego. And I mean you just change your staff. We ended up going to the World Series that year.

Not just the talent that he was, but you know Kevin. And his approach to the game and everything just made the rest of the staff better.

But most of our guys were homegrown guys. You look back up at San Francisco. We got Barry Zito, and that was a very exciting time. And at times got a little bumpy there, but you look at what he did in 2012, it's well worth it.

Q. In your first year in San Francisco, you had Barry in

his last year. What did you think of the Hall of Fame vote yesterday and the whole predicament at this point?

BRUCE BOCHY: You know, my take on this, I'm good with whatever they want, as far as the committee, with the Hall of Fame, you writers, when you all vote.

I happened to have Barry for a year. I saw him across the field. He's the best player I've ever seen. He is. But with the setup that they have, it's made it difficult for a lot of these guys to get in.

I try not to get caught up -- well, he's definitely going to be in or this or that. Barry is going to get in I think at some point, I really believe that.

He was really good the one year I had him. I'm thankful for the time I had with him. And so I actually pull for him, to be honest. I think the world of Barry. But I understand those guys, that group, they're having a difficult time. But I think it's going to happen for him at some point.

Q. What about McGriff?

BRUCE BOCHY: I should have mentioned Freddy. You've got to look at the positives. I had Freddy in San Diego. And I mean, this guy is -- you talk about class. What a teammate. Such a great guy.

But, what a great talent, too. You look at all the clubs he's been to, and what he did for every club. I mean, we traded him to Atlanta and ends up killing San Francisco because of what he did.

So Freddy deserves to be in there. And couldn't be happier for him. And in fact I need to fire him a text. I'm glad you reminded me.

Q. Can you go back, you were just talking about the Kevin Brown acquisition with San Diego, and I think that you also brought in Dave Stewart as pitching coach, new pitching coach, you had guy (indiscernible) at the top of your rotation. Can you explain a little bit more like how the staff mindset changed? You started to allude to it a little bit.

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah, I'll use another name on this. With Kevin Brown, we signed a guy in 2009 in San Francisco, Randy Johnson. And this is Randy toward the end of his career.

And he won his 300th, but he wasn't the Big Unit like he used to be. But the impact he made on that staff, on Tim Lincecum and Cain. And Timmy won the Cy Young. And

his comment was, really, you're happy with one? It was just Randy's mentality.

And you never stopped trying to be better. And Kevin Brown was like that. Every bullpen, it was full-bore, everything he did. And that's contagious.

And the great thing about our game is you're able to play -- if you're in it for a while, you get to spend a lot of time with tremendous players. And you see why they're so good. But the same thing happens for the players.

They've got a guy right beside them, see how hard they work. Well, they want to do the same, not just with the work, but how they approach every game.

Q. What is Will Venable's role going to be? I know his title.

BRUCE BOCHY: Can't get caught up in the titles too much. But he's going to be on the bench helping out. He'll be help coordinate spring training, but he'll be your typical bench coach.

I know Donnie Ecker, he has a similar title. He'll still be in the dugout, but he's going to be helping our offense. That's a gift that he has.

But, hey, I plan on using all these guys and picking their brains, too.

Q. What did you think of the new playoff format, what it does for the game but also the different challenge it presents?

BRUCE BOCHY: I think you first look at it when they expand it. You always go, oh man, we're going to flood it out. But it was good for baseball. It was.

You look at how it went, and I know there's some questions going, well, some teams are sitting, it affected them. But the best team won. The best team were the World Champions. And I think the interest it created, it's good for the game. It's good for a lot of fans throughout our country. And a lot of teams that were battling at the end to get there. So, I'm good with it.

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