

All-Star Futures Game

Saturday, July 8, 2023

Seattle, Washington, USA

T-Mobile Park

Harold Reynolds

Raul Ibañez

Futures Game Press Conference



HAROLD REYNOLDS: Raul is taking full advantage of working at MLB Network. I'll give you two things that already happened today: One I walk in, they go, We're using the challenge system. I'm like, all right. The other day we were on a Zoom call and I go, It's three right? Raul goes, I'm going to give you one; it's only two. I go, okay, all right.

So I get here this morning and they say, Hey, you're going to get the challenge, Harold. If you use it, it's done. Okay. I get it.

Then it turns out the players are the ones that challenge, not me. Then they switched it again. And then they switched it back and I know they're talking to him.

So this is why I know. So we go out for BP and I go in to the coaches' room, guys are dressing in batting practice uniforms, I'm saying, What's up, man! You're throwing to my team, this and that.

I got four catchers, catchers throw the best batting practice, right. Going to be great. Kids are going to love it. Next thing I know, I leave, I come back, it's time for BP, he sends a left-hander over and another right-hander throwing ball all over the place, and my kids was like, what happened to the four catchers? I said, Raul, stole 'em.

RAUL IBAÑEZ: (Laughing) I had nothing to do with that. I had nothing to do with that. That's news to me.

By the way, the two challenge, we found out after I announced it to the boys. I was like, we got two manager challenges. About 15 minutes later somebody walked in and said no, no manager challenges. I'm sorry.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: It's fun messing with Raul.

All right, are we ready?

Q. So only two for sure?

HAROLD REYNOLDS: Two, and it's the players that's got to ask, they turn around and acknowledge the umpire.

Q. It's usually three but it's only seven innings, so okay?

HAROLD REYNOLDS: Yes.

RAUL IBAÑEZ: Usually three and you get it keep it if you win. Here it's two, you lose it no matter what.

So after we win two challenges and Harold loses two challenges, it's over either way.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: Look, I got one day to manage; we're using it. I'm using everything just so I can say, Hey, I did that. (Laughing.)

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take some questions.

Q. Raul, I want to ask you about the challenge system and your role with the league. What have been your impressions of it generally?

RAUL IBAÑEZ: I think my general impressions have been positive. It seems to be something that the players like and the coaches and the people on the field like. It's a really unique way to put the game back in the players' hands, and it's really designed to miss the kind of egregious calls where a player has the opportunity to challenge a call and keep it if he wins.

But it's also a cool team dynamic the way that teams seem to use 'em strategically and spread them out and each organization has their own independent way of doing it. Who gets to challenge, some organizations say, it's only the pitchers, some say it's only the catcher. Some said the hitters can do it but only the catcher.

So it's a really cool thing. It seems to be something that's popular amongst the players.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: To echo that, in talking to the players, something that I didn't get to know or do a lot, with



this situation, it's really created more of a team thing in the minor leagues. Any player has gone through it, Raul, myself, whoever, you've got to put your own numbers up if you want to keep moving. So, yeah, some playing for the Wausau Timbers but I better do my job.

I think it's brought back a little more, this is my team, and we're playing as a unit to win. And I think it's special because our generation of players now is a travel ball generation. I got mine, Mr. Jones wants me to go play in Cooperstown, I'm out. It's brought that team thing back, I think, to the minor leagues a little bit. Do you like that?

RAUL IBAÑEZ: Interesting. Yeah.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: Talking to the players.

Q. Can you go back and think maybe your best day as a Mariner or as a Major League ballplayer that you hope these guys playing for you get a chance to experience down the road.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: Yeah, I think the biggest thing is that first day in the Big Leagues. I mean, there's nothing like it. It's everything moving a hundred miles an hour. You can talk about All Star Games, great plays, home runs, you name it. But when your friends you go back to high school and you talk with your friends and you go back home, you always talk about how green the grass was. How different everything looked and felt. That's a feeling I hope these guys get. That means that they made it, for one. But it's just a unique experience. I don't know.

RAUL IBAÑEZ: Yeah, I totally agree with that. As far as these guys getting to have this opportunity to be amongst their peers, it's really hard to get into any locker room professionally, in professional baseball but to get into the Future Game is extraordinarily hard.

So just to see the excitement and the joy and I walked around and asked some of the guys what they're feeling like and they're saying it's a surreal experience to walk out on this incredible field at T-Mobile Park. I had the distinct privilege and pleasure to play on this field for a long time.

And for these young guys to get this opportunity to play and perform against this level of competition on this stage at this ballpark is something that's, it's really, it's an extraordinary experience and one they will never forget. And the bonds that they're going to create even amongst each other, both sides, is something that's unforgettable.

We talked to Yonder a little while ago, Yonder played in this game and he's talking about how Paul Goldschmidt and Mike Trout were on the same field with him, and

there's this unique bond that they still carry to this day just because of this experience.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: Its other thing too, a cool deal happened during batting practice. Spencer Jones, I don't know if you know who Spencer is, went to Vanderbilt, with the Yankees, 6'7", I'm talking to him and he goes, Is that Dave Winfield?

And I go, Yeah, it's Dave. Have you ever met him?

No, man.

I'm like let me go get Dave and bring him over. He got a chance to meet Dave Winfield, who his mom's talked about since he was five years old and Spencer is this big kid and they kept telling him, You're going to big like Dave Winfield. It's okay. It made him comfortable in become 6'7". And then to look over and see Dave Winfield and I brought him over, and they had this conversation for 10 minutes. It was pretty cool.

So that's an experience you get being here. Pretty special.

RAUL IBAÑEZ: That's a great story, I love that.

Q. You guys have been asked this many times but I think it's appropriate to ask it again, what Seattle and this park and this fan base means to both of you guys and how great it is to come back and do this for them.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: Well, I'm older, so I'll go first. I grew up in the Northwest. I knew the fact that the Mariners were leaving if Griffey and this group don't come along. It's special to sit here this many years later and host an All-Star Game for a team that you thought would be gone. Out of town. We watched the Sonics leave and it leaves a hole in the city. And I can't even imagine what it would be like if the Mariners weren't here.

And then being a guy that lived in Seattle in the off-season and spent my time here and all that, I mean Mount Majestic out there, Mount Rainier. When people come out and the weather's like this, they're going to walk out of here thinking Seattle is the greatest town they have ever been in their life. And that's the beauty of the Northwest.

So I'm excited for the representation. Last night the HBCU game, crowd came out, this place is going to be packed for the Futures Game. It's nice to show the country that this is a baseball town. At one point, it wasn't going to be. So that's the turnaround story.

RAUL IBAÑEZ: That's awesome. Getting the opportunity to play, I got to come up with the Mariners organization,

this was my first love. Not just as a young man or as a young player but as your transitioning to become a man I had mentors like Jim Skaalen in the organization and Mike Goff, and these guys were more concerned -- I remember getting the advice from Jim Skaalen, where it's more important to be a good person than it is to be a good player and it's something that I carry with me to this day.

So not only my first love as an organization and my first experience at seeing mountains as a kid from Miami, mountains and deer, getting to play in Bellingham Washington with the host family Jim and Sheri Emerson, who we are still in contact with. And then having the opportunity to play at the Kingdome and I still remember Junior hitting a couple of homers and all the light bulbs going off. Then transitioning into this ballpark and just being a part of that history is something that, it's truly special and indescribable really. Just feel honored and blessed to be here.

Q. The challenge system. I think people hear about automated balls and strikes and what it could mean at the major league level. How important is exposure to what the system could be with events like this that maybe have a wider breadth and scale than maybe a Double A game or a Triple A game?

RAUL IBAÑEZ: It's a really diligent process. A lot of really bright people that work on this behind the scenes, people like Reed MacPhail and Joe Martinez and Morgan Sword that are instrumental in this process. Mike Hill.

So making sure that there's exposure and there's, you know, you're really testing the system and you gradually adapt and adjust and a very stringent scientific process that's being applied to the system.

So it's a great way -- these guys have been exposed to it in the minor leagues, a lot of these young guys have already been exposed to it. I think it's going to be comfortable for them. I also think it's a really fun way for the fans to get a taste of what it could look like.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: I think also from the broadcast side, and now sitting in a manager's seat, Major League Baseball's not going to roll out rules unless they know it's going to be successful. We look at this year, right, we're all talking about the rule changes and everything that's happening. That's 8,000 games they tested in the minors before they roll it out. Because you know, if you don't do it right, you only get one shot at it. So I think that the due diligence of many, many, many conversations to even get to a point where you bring something on the field at the major league level, it's been tested pretty good and it's going to have to be successful.

And I think that Manfred's well aware of that and I think that everybody who works under his regime understands that. So when you get to a point where you have a testing system or a challenge system, even in a Futures Game, it's been through a lot to get to this point.

So I think that's, looking at the new rules, that's the one thing, when baseball makes the major historic steps that they made, they know it's going to be successful before they do it. Even you might know an answer to a question before you ask it, you know, you're going to know. And I think that's the big thing with MLB what they have done with the rules.

Q. (Question in Spanish.)

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thanks, guys.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: Hey, last thing, really, honestly, it's an honor to work with this guy. And Major League Baseball is lucky to have him. And all the different things they're going through, like he translated in Spanish, he's reaching the Latin players, he's reaching everybody across the board, you needed a guy like that. And for him to be sitting in the manager's seat, we're going to whip his tail.

(Laughing.)

RAUL IBAÑEZ: Oh, thanks, Harold. I was getting emotional until the end.

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