

93rd MLB All-Star Game

Monday, July 10, 2023

Seattle, Washington, USA

T-Mobile Park

Dusty Baker

Rob Thomson

Gerrit Cole

Zac Gallen

Press Conference



and Jonah Heim catching. Sounds like a winner.

LAUREN GARDNER: You sound confident. What does it mean to you to be managing yet another All Star team?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, I don't know. Means a lot, I guess. Think about it, last year I was on the losing end of the World Series and this year I'm on the winning end of the World Series. And it means a lot to the city of Houston, means a lot to my family.

From playing in a couple All Star Games there's nothing like it, actually. I never made an All Star team until I got to the Big Leagues, I was always an alternate. So it was a big deal for me to play in the Big Leagues, make a couple All Star teams, and seems a bigger deal now for me to be a manager.

LAUREN GARDNER: Well, it's an honor to share this podium with you once again here at the All Star Game. Gerrit Cole to your left will be your starting pitcher. Why did you decide to go with him?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, I mean, guy's been here five, six times, about time he started one. (Laughing.) And plus he's one of the best there is. And plus he wanted it. A lot of guys sometimes they might not want to pitch in this particular game, but he wanted to pitch. Hey, man if a guy like Gerrit Cole wants to pitch, I'll let him pitch.

LAUREN GARDNER: Gerrit, what's your reaction to that? 162-game season, we know this is a marathon, not a sprint and you decided to take the time here in mid-July to get the ball to start this game.

GERRIT COLE: I think it's just always something that I've wanted to do, and I feel like I'm physically able to do it and I got an opportunity and thankful that Dusty selected me.

Like some of my fondest memories growing up, one of 'em is watching Pedro in the All Star Game starting, and I've been to a few of them and had the pleasure of watching some future Hall of Famers do it. I've always been like, man, I really hope I could do that one day.

LAUREN GARDNER: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to beautiful Seattle, Washington for the 93rd annual Midsummer Classic. My name is Lauren Gardner, host of Off Base and well, a lot of other shows on MLB Network, and it is an honor and a privilege to be master of ceremonies for today's press conference.

As you can see all of our players arrived yesterday, 34 of whom are first-time All Stars. And the game continues to get younger, 16 of those All Stars are age 24 or younger, including the reigning AL Rookie of the Year, Julio Rodríguez, who is an absolute superstar for the Seattle Mariners.

I also have the privilege of introducing tomorrow's starting pitchers. To my right you may have heard of him having an outstanding season, with the surprise Arizona Diamondbacks, I am going to say though I did call that before the beginning of the season, that you guys were going to have great one, as a Rockies fan that was tough to admit, Zac Gallen, who will be playing under his manager, the National League champion Rob Thomson of the Philadelphia Phillies.

And to my left, Cy Young winner with the New York Yankees Gerrit Cole will be getting the start for the American League under his skipper, Dusty Baker, who is the reigning World Series manager of the Houston Astros.

Dusty, without further adieu, I'll let you take it away and announce your starting lineup. Welcome.

DUSTY BAKER: Okay. Hello, everyone. My lineup is Marcus Semien leading off, Shohei Ohtani second, Randy Arozarena, third playing left field, Corey Seager playing shortstop, Yandy Díaz at first base, Adolis Garcia in right field, Austin Hays in center field, Josh Jung at third base



LAUREN GARDNER: Is there anyone in that clubhouse you're looking forward to having a conversation with or playing alongside?

GERRIT COLE: I mean, there's a lot of superstars, for sure. I just think, like you mentioned, all the young players. It's going to be fun to get to know some of them and just see how they're adjusting to Major League life and what they're learning. I remember myself being young and having to go through all those experiences and how much fun they could be.

So sharing some of that and getting to know them a little bit is definitely what I'm looking forward to.

LAUREN GARDNER: Real quick, we need a Home Run Derby pick.

GERRIT COLE: Julio. He's got the home crowd.

LAUREN GARDNER: That's my pick too. Dusty? I'm putting you on the spot.

DUSTY BAKER: You want to know the truth, I don't even know who is in the Home Run Derby. (Laughing.) Give me a few names.

LAUREN GARDNER: Hey, you're a focused individual and I can appreciate that. Julio Rodríguez, Luis Robert Jr is in there, Pete Alonso.

DUSTY BAKER: Ooh, big Pete Alonso.

LAUREN GARDNER: Juan Soto.

DUSTY BAKER: Oh, man. I like Luis Robert if they can throw the ball in a certain area.

LAUREN GARDNER: He's the number one seed.

DUSTY BAKER: Yes.

LAUREN GARDNER: All right. I love that. Well, fellas, thank you very much and best of luck in tomorrow's game.

As we turn our attention back to the NL side, Rob Thomson will be managing the National League team. I see you have your lineup there, sir. Why don't you go ahead and give it to us.

ROB THOMSON: I will. So the lineup for the National League tomorrow will be Ronald Acuña Jr. in right field. He'll be leading off.

Hitting second will be Freddie Freeman at first base.

Hitting third will be Mookie Betts in center field.

Batting fourth will be J.D. Martinez, our DH.

Hitting 5th will be Nolan Arenado at third base.

Hitting 6th will be Luis Arraez at second base.

Hitting 7th will be Sean Murphy catching.

Hitting 8th will be Corbin Carroll in left field.

And hitting 9th will be Orlando Arcia at shortstop.

And our starting pitcher is a man sitting to my right, Zac Gallen, who has had an unbelievable year and has earned every bit of it.

LAUREN GARDNER: You look at those names in the lineup, how difficult was it to put that thing together?

ROB THOMSON: Yeah, we didn't know what to do, to tell you the truth. So Kevin Long, our hitting coach, and I got together and we threw it together. Any one of these guys, almost everyone's got close to a .900 OPS; they could hit anywhere in the lineup. So we just threw it together and see what we got.

LAUREN GARDNER: They say that's a good problem. When you look at the guy to your right, you said he's obviously very deserving of this start tomorrow. What went into that decision and what sort of conversation did the two of you have?

ROB THOMSON: Well, Caleb Cotham and I, we got together once the original roster was put out before they put in the -- before guys backed out and they put in new pitchers, and we just looked at the numbers and Zac's numbers just came out of off the page for us: 11-3 record, almost a 3.00 ERA. OPS against is .610. The numbers are incredible. So he's had a great year. Let's keep him healthy and keep him going.

LAUREN GARDNER: Exactly and a big reason why the Arizona Diamondbacks are having the season they are at the midway point here in 2023.

Zac, welcome to the All Star Game. What was your initial reaction when you found out not only were you named but that you will be starting?

ZAC GALLEN: Yeah, thanks. It's been a whirlwind, really. Yeah, I think I found out Wednesday or Thursday morning, Torey had FaceTimed me. So I kind of had to tell white



lies for the last few days to my family and stuff like that.

But, yeah, I mean it's been crazy. I feel like I've worked hard. This is something that I dreamed of as a kid. So for it to come to fruition is everything and more, really.

LAUREN GARDNER: Okay. We are now going to open it up to the media for questions.

Q. You mentioned you talked to Pedro or you watched Pedro Martinez pitch in the All Star. What exactly do you like about Pedro Martinez's pitching?

GERRIT COLE: He is, well, I loved his changeup and I loved how he was able to create so much velocity with such a small frame. It was really quite unique. His stuff was so explosive and probably most of all he was just always fearless. That was something I enjoyed watching the most about him.

Q. Zac, you've had a terrific first half of the season. So has the team. This is kind of a culmination of all of that. How do you feel about what you and the team have accomplished to this point?

ZAC GALLEN: Yeah, we have a great clubhouse. I think that make it's easier on us. I think we're really coming into our identity. But yeah, we played really well, this is awesome. I'm happy to be here to share it with three other guys that we have here. Very deserving. But, yeah, it's been an awesome first half. See if we can keep it going.

Q. I want to talk about Scott Servais, he mentioned a couple weeks ago you gave him a little advice when he first started managing. Curious your thoughts on adding him to the team, and he mentioned he played for you a long time ago when you were with the Giants.

DUSTY BAKER: Yeah, and Scott's a very fine manager. At the time you never think about who on your staff or who on your team would be a fine manager in the future, but he was always paying attention, he would always ask me a lot of questions and you like people like that to be around you.

The thing about it is we are here in Seattle and this is Scott's home. I actually told him that I didn't want his office. They're going to put me in the back back there somewhere, but he told me he forced me to go and take his office. And I told him, well, I won't look the in any drawers or anything see if I can pick up any tips while I'm in his office.

But, yeah, I mean he's a fine manager and they have a fine team here in Seattle. I'm glad to be back here. This is one of my favorite towns of all time.

Q. You obviously been around the game for quite a long time. Trevor Wilson is one of the guys you coached 30-something years ago, his son Paul's hoping to get drafted today. He's going to be in your dugout tomorrow as a bat boy. Can you discuss the hunting trips you've gone on and see him as a kid grow up?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, you sound like you know a lot about me. Yeah, Trevor was one of my favorite players. We used to go fishing when he was a player and I was a manager. And then he had a son, Paul Wilson, who might get drafted today out of high school. Out of Beaverton, Oregon. And he's going to be our honorary batboy. I was quite shocked, you know, when his inseam was I think 42 inches (laughing), and he's 18 years old like 6'5", left-hander. I taught him how to pheasant hunt. He would come down to go hunting with me and my buddies.

So looking forward to seeing him. You like to see young men that you might have motivated to affect their future. So I'm really looking forward to seeing him.

Q. With Luis Arraez flirting with .400, how special is it to see a guy threatening to finally hit .400 after all these years?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, I tell you, to be hitting .400 at this point in time. Like I saw him in the hotel this morning, I wished him well, because he's probably close to being one of my favorite hitters to watch. I told my son to watch him.

He's full of energy. He is like the Energizer Bunny. He moves every muscle every time he moves. So he's fun to watch and he's fun to watch hit. And I'm pulling for him.

ROB THOMSON: We just got done playing him and we wouldn't get him out. He is really an incredible hitter. He knows the strike zone, he's got a short stroke, he uses the entire field. He's not a plus-plus runner, so to have the average that he does right now, he doesn't strike out, it's really incredible. He is an exceptional hitter.

Q. Shohei Ohtani, great year. Something we've never seen before. What do you take about this guy and how unbelievable is it going to be you having him on your roster for the All Star Game?

DUSTY BAKER: This is the second time. I mean, everybody would love to have him on their roster. We play them quite often in the same division as them, so we have to battle him against him pitching and hitting. He's probably one of the most polite, most honorable opponent that we face.

I feel badly because sometimes he's trying to nod to me before the game starts, and I'm looking down because I don't want to look at him. Because he will nod and then hit a home run over the fence, and then I got to get on my wife, who is Filipino, for taking a picture when he comes across home plate.

So, yeah, he's the most incredible athlete I've ever seen in baseball. I've seen some great players, but I mean none that can both run like the wind, throw a hundred miles an hour and hit as well as anybody in the game.

Q. Rob, you will obviously have a lot of Braves to work with here. Curious, are we going to see like six of 'em out there at once or even are you going to have an all-Braves infield since you have all these guys?

ROB THOMSON: I guess there could be a chance that we have an all-Braves infield.

But, yeah, they have got a great club. They put up some really good offensive numbers, and they have all have earned that right to be on this team. So I'm really looking forward to getting to meet them, everybody in the clubhouse really, but I'm really looking forward to get to meet them and be with them and it's really an honor to be managing this group of talent.

Q. Rob, what went into your decision to add Derek Shelton to your coaching staff and also bring your bullpen catchers here?

ROB THOMSON: Yeah, so I added Derek because of the fact -- Derek and I go back a long time, back to our Yankee days. Derek was actually a player for me. I was coaching a team in Greensboro, North Carolina, our A-ball club, and Derek was kind of a backup catcher. On that team also was Derek Jeter and Mariano Rivera.

So Shely moved on, went to spring training, the next year I think he got hurt. A couple years later we hired him as a coach and him and I have been very good friends, and Derek was just a student of the game. Asked so many questions, went on to be hitting coordinator for Cleveland, and a hitting coach in the Big Leagues for Cleveland, and then he got a chance to manage in the Big Leagues. He's really an intelligent guy and a great leader in my mind, and they were playing so well at the start that I thought that he earned that right to come here to the All Star Game.

As far as the two bullpen catchers, usually we can take one, but MLB was kind enough this year to bring both of them because both of those guys helped out so much during the World Series last year, like rubbing up balls and

taking care of the game balls. So MLB did us a favor and let us bring both of 'em. So I'm happy everybody's here.

Q. In a situation like this where you're managing an All Star Game and you have a stacked roster, you mentioned everyone's basically at a .900 OPS, how decide who hits ninth in your lineup?

DUSTY BAKER: Rob, go ahead, man. (Laughing).

ROB THOMSON: Well, we took actually Orlando Arcia's got a great OPS but he's got actually the lowest of the starters, so we hit him ninth.

DUSTY BAKER: Yeah, see, I hit him ninth simply because he's a catcher and I'm going to try to split the duties between three catchers at that point in time. So and I don't know, I got so many great players, somebody had to hit ninth.

LAUREN GARDNER: Seems like sound logic to me. I appreciate that.

Q. Gerrit, how is it like facing a guy like Julio Rodríguez, does it represent quite a challenge facing him? That's my first question.

GERRIT COLE: Yeah, I mean, Julio has a lot of characteristics of all great right-handed hitters. They take the fastball the opposite way with power and they ride out the breaking balls to the pull side. He has really good awareness of the strike zone. His obviously kind of just a such a fun personality that I think his teammates really feed off of.

So he's well equipped in the box to drive the ball everywhere and he sets the tone for club.

Q. For both managers, how different is the All Star Game these days, especially for Dusty who's been around longer than you?

LAUREN GARDNER: Oh, Topper's been around for quite some time.

Q. Oh, I'm really sure, but of course I would like to know your focus on how the All Star Game has changed throughout decades.

DUSTY BAKER: Well, when I was a kid the All Star Game there was Mays, Clemente, Robinson, a lot of the greats that are in the Hall of Fame, Spahn and Drysdale and Koufax and it's changed for those guys who would actually play all nine innings and some of the guys wouldn't play at all. And there was a competition between the National

League and the American League, and the American League didn't like being called the junior circuit, and so the National League was really, really inspired to try to win the game, and was going to try to leave their stars out there as much as anything. And we were playing for pride in the league that you were in.

But now there's so much movement where guys might be in the American League one year and the National League a couple years later. Back then there wasn't that much movement off players or teams or guys traded, especially superstars. So it's a little less competitive, but I think the guys still like to compete. But at the same time there's, it's more of an exhibition game now than it was back then.

ROB THOMSON: Yeah, I agree. And the only thing I have to add to it is that all I want to do, and I'm sure Dusty's the same, is get these players in the game, get 'em out of the game and get 'em back to their clubs healthy. And that they have a lot of fun.

Q. For both starting pitchers. Has the pitch clock helped you or hurt you?

GERRIT COLE: I, I'm not sure. I feel that, I feel that my game prior to the pitch clock had been within the confines of what has been laid out for this year. I've certainly learned some things while I've gone along, in terms of how to manage your breath and how to make sure that you're thinking clearly. Because you're boxed in on how long you have to think.

I just, I enjoy it. I mean, I think I saw a statistic about three-hour games being down like dramatically. I mean, any extra time I can get with my two boys is great, and my wife. And the New York traffic can sometimes be a grind. So getting home at 11 instead of 12 or 12:15 on a regular basis is really great. I don't feel the quality of the game has dropped at all. In fact, I think it's actually kind of picked up to a certain extent, so...

ZAC GALLEN: Yeah, I mean, last year we didn't have the pitch clock, I didn't make the All-Star Game. This year there was a pitch clock and I made the All-Star Game. So maybe it helped. But, yeah, it was definitely an adjustment period. Spring training was, for sure. It was tough. But, yeah, I think just like everybody else, we just adapt. There's certain parts where you can kind of game it and also parts like Gerrit was saying where you have to think clearly, maybe take a mound visit in a spot where you're not expecting to.

But, yeah, I mean, I'm still figuring it out. But like he said, the times are down dramatically. I think it's a little bit more enjoyable for the fans. Yeah, so I don't mind it.

Q. Last year you for your coaches brought a tailor in and got them suits. Are you doing the same this year or something different?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, we look like a band this year because we got 'em all the same blue blazer. And so the only thing is, as the leader of the band, I didn't wear mine. So I just had to let people no I was leader of the band.

Q. Rob, knowing what Dusty did last year, did that put any pressure on you to do something for your coaches?

ROB THOMSON: Well, it would have if I had have known that's what he did. But I didn't know that, so now I feel bad.

Q. Little thing on Luis Robert, you said that you kind of pick him to win the Derby tonight if he gets the ball in a certain area. I want to know what that area is. And more important, when his name came up you oohed. Why does he make you -- is he one of those guys kind of makes you ooh and aww, is that what you meant by that?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, I mean he's a tremendous talent. I've always thought that. And he's just now reaching his potential of that talent, which we don't really don't know what his ceiling is.

I mean, so I can't tell you what that area is because he might be listening (laughing.) Because as much as we're on the same side, at the same time we're doing a little scouting to try to figure out how to get guys out. And probably Gerrit is probably doing the same thing. You know what I mean?

So, yeah, I mean, there's an area that he doesn't miss and I'm sure they will probably try to throw it in that area.

Q. A play off the Braves question. Do you intend to get Eovaldi in there while you've got the other five Rangers in there and end up with six guys from that team on the field at the same time?

DUSTY BAKER: Well, I hope so. I haven't spoken to him yet. I haven't spoken to our pitching coach yet who is going to talk to him. So, yes, right now we're planning on getting everybody in there probably on one inning that's available. But we've had to mix and match a little bit on who is available, who pitched Sunday, who pitched Saturday. So, above all, we have to try to take care of other people's players.

Q. Last night when you guys made your first round

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pick Rob Manfred came out and the Mariner fans just hammered him. A lot of boos in the crowd. Obviously there's a rivalry, at least from Seattle's perspective, with the Astros and I wonder if you feel that too from your perspective too?

DUSTY BAKER: Oh, yeah, I feel it. I mean, I hear boos too. And, I mean, this is a great town. Like I said, this is one of my favorite towns in America and one of the towns that I wanted to manage in at some point in time. But we'll probably get a lot of boos when our guys are introduced tomorrow. So you're kind of used to it. You don't like it, necessarily, but you got to use it as a motivator versus a downer. And so -- but Rob got some boos too. So we're in the same boat. (Laughing.)

LAUREN GARDNER: It's all about perspective, right. Well that concludes our press conference. We want to thank everyone for coming out here thank you.

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