

NL Wild Card Series:

Braves vs Padres

Tuesday, October 1, 2024

San Diego, California, USA

Petco Park

San Diego Padres

Joe Musgrove

Fernando Tatis Jr.

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Joe, two questions, one, as you were coming back and rehabbing from injury, what was your level of confidence or doubt in a way in terms of where you thought you would get?

JOE MUSGROVE: It was pretty high. I think any athlete will tell you, I think you have to create space for the ideal situation. I know I prepare mentally, physically as well as possible to give myself the opportunity to be back and healthy. And it's kind of just one day at a time.

You keep checking boxes, you show up and you give everything you have on days that you don't feel like doing it and you kind of just hope that things are going to fall the way they should.

But we've got a really good training staff here. They do a good job of creating good programs and making time for us. I felt pretty confident.

Q. What did you learn a couple of years ago in New York in that game about your ability to step up in really big situations, and tomorrow, one way or the other, one of these teams' season will be in the balance and you'll have the ball?

JOE MUSGROVE: You try not to make too much of it. It's another game and obviously the stakes are a lot higher. There's a lot more at stake.

But it's the same game we've played all year long. It's a team we've seen before. It's just a matter of managing your emotions and staying in the moment and not letting the fears and doubt and worry sink in.

It's a real thing. Everyone experiences it. But I think the longer you play this game, the better you get at managing



that and trying to channel it to benefit you.

Q. Fernando, it was four years ago today you had the bat flip against the Cardinals. How much do you remember that game and how much do you want to get back after watching this team in 2022?

FERNANDO TATIS: I remember a lot of it, especially the emotions. Just looking forward to what we can do as a team this year. And I feel like part of that, what I did back in those days is definitely going to be probably even better this time.

Q. Fernando, you weren't part of the 2022 run. What do you expect from the atmosphere tonight? What do you expect from the crowd here at pet co-park?

FERNANDO TATIS: It's going to be loud just like it has been all season long. So I know it's not going to be no weird or different scenario or anything that I haven't seen before. But just looking forward to the energy and what the fans are going to bring.

Q. What do you expect from postseason baseball in terms of the intensity on the field? And does 2020 prepare you for that at all now, given how different it was?

FERNANDO TATIS: Yeah, but just my entire career I feel like I've been prepared for that moment. So nothing different to do, just show up and just play baseball the same way you had played all your life.

Q. Joe, Mike joked yesterday that he picked the playoff rotation out of a hat. You guys have all finished the season really strong. What's it say about the group that Darvish is in the bullpen and Martin Perez, he pitched Sunday and he's not on the roster -- to have those guys potentially as this thing progresses what that means for this team?

JOE MUSGROVE: I think if you look at the way it's lined up now, it's probably a lot different from what people would have expected it to be at the start of the year. Part of that is the time that Yu missed. Maybe he's not quite as sharp



as you want to be or innings-wise, pitch count-wise built up as much.

But King's another guy that I don't think anybody expected to get as much as we've gotten out of him this year. Not to discredit anything he's done, but simply the fact that he's been a reliever the past couple of years.

He's started in the past, but to make that big inning jump in the first year and to be as quality as he's been, I think it's exceeded anyone's expectations. He's been the most reliable, the most consistent. He's been healthy all year. And I think we're all really happy with him taking ball in game one.

I think the way that myself and Cease have thrown, along with King, has been really good run. And probably could have run us three out there in any order and felt good about it.

I think we all feel confident with Mike taking the ball. He's a really smart guy. He pitches to his strengths and does a good job game planning for lineups. It's helpful for us to watch back and see how he attacks the guys, see some of the tendencies of the other hitters.

But I feel really confident with the three that we're running out there. I'm sure Darvish would love to be in that mix, Martin would love to be in that mix. But it shows a little bit of our group again guys will do whatever is needed to move on.

So this is kind of the way that it worked out based on a number of different things, but I think we feel confident with the guys we're running out there.

Q. Joe, obviously for the most part the results since you have come back have been really good. Wondering what you feel the keys have been for you the last month or so.

JOE MUSGROVE: Just allowing myself the time to get where I need, not going in there -- in the past I've had injuries and come back and I've tried to do a little too much with a small pitch count and ended up not getting the progression work that I needed because I was so focused on getting deep into the game and being as efficient as possible that I didn't use my pitches in a fashion that I typically would and I didn't prepare them properly.

I've always been a kind of cross-that-bridge-when-we-get-there kind of guy, with my rehab as well -- the first question about not knowing what would come from the injury and if there was concern. I don't have a whole lot of that. I do things that I know I

need to do to get ready and take it a day at a time.

I honestly don't even remember what your question was again. I started rambling.

Q. The keys to your success.

MIKE SHILDT: I think a lot of it is just putting a lot of faith in the training staff and trusting Ruben and attacking on my game plan and not trying to rush things, just using the pitches, be as efficient as possible while still pitching my game.

And obviously the scenario of when I came back in the year and the importance of how well the team was playing to not be the rock dragging guys back down when Cease and Martin and Dylan are throwing so well.

A lot of it, some of it is the atmosphere and the environment I was thrust into when I did come back. And another part is past experiences telling me that I need to do this the right way.

Q. Fernando, this has been a really good offensive team all year, batting average-wise, scoring runs-wise. What do you feel stands out about this lineup in particular, top to bottom, with the different guys you have?

FERNANDO TATIS: Everybody is just staying under true strength. I feel everybody in this lineup knows what they're capable of as a hitting and they're just practicing the right way. Everybody's just seeing the game and playing the game, just as simple as that. And we have stayed really true to ourselves. And that's what has been our key so far.

Q. Joe, what was it like watching the doubleheader if you did watch it yesterday and maybe not knowing until the end who you were going to face? And what do you make of the advantage you guys have coming in with them flying across the country and everything?

JOE MUSGROVE: I don't think we take a whole lot of weight into their schedule and who's available and the fact that they had to travel across country. It's the playoffs, man, and everyone's ready to go. I think they could have gotten in at 2:00 today and felt pretty good getting out on the field and playing playoffs.

We're not taking that as us having the upper hand going into it, whether it looks that way or not. It's a really competitive team. I think when the moment calls, guys in this level can step up and rise to the occasion.

The format and the layout of how the game's worked out



for them obviously puts them in a little bit of a hole with the travel and all that stuff. But we expect them to be ready to go and ready to play.

Q. Fernando, did you watch any of those games yesterday? What do you make of this match-up?

FERNANDO TATIS JR.: I didn't watch it.

JOE MUSGROVE: Exciting games, though. The first game was nuts back and forth. I can only imagine how the Diamondbacks feel watching that game knowing that Sale is not throwing going into Game 2 feeling like they have a good chance. It was a wild two games.

Q. Fernando, I'm wondering with the leg, how does it feel compared to when you first came back from the IL?

FERNANDO TATIS JR.: It's getting better through the games. Probably the more I ramp it up, the better it feels. Comfortable and ready to go.

Q. Is there a percent you can put on it what percent of full strength you are at with the leg right now?

FERNANDO TATIS JR.: It comes and goes. But I feel good where I'm at. I wouldn't put a number on it. Just some days I feel a little bit more tired than others. But I feel really good playing baseball.

Q. Fernando, everyone was watching the game yesterday. Why did you choose not to?

FERNANDO TATIS JR.: Team workout. No, but just checking in with medical staff and just got involved during the day.

Q. When did you find out who the Braves were starting today and how does that affect your preparation?

FERNANDO TATIS JR.: I found out today. Still as far as my preparation, I feel like I just bring my talent every day to the field just to show up and post.

Q. Given how you guys got in in '22 versus how you got in this year, is there a different feeling coming into this playoff series than there was in 2022?

JOE MUSGROVE: Yeah, I think the consistency level basically we played in the entire second half gives us a lot of confidence going in. I think we have a clear understanding of who our team is and how we operate, and everyone knows what's expected of them and what

their role is.

In 2022, there was a sense, I don't know how we're doing this but we're going to keep doing it. There wasn't really a clear-cut format for us or an identity that we can rely on. It was kind of just getting hot at the right time and riding the wave of the energy of the playoffs.

This is a position that we expected to be in from Spring Training on, and Shildt has been adamant about that all year, about re-instilling that in our minds that we are going to be in this position at the end of the year.

I think mentally a lot of us are mentally prepared for this moment, whereas in 2022 we were a little out of it and made a run and got hot at the right time and there wasn't a lot of clarity on what our team was.

This is the same team we've had since spring approach-wise, mentality-wise. So the additions we've made at the deadline strengthen that. I feel we're at an all-time high in confidence and understanding of how our team operates best and what we need to do.

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