

NL Wild Card Series: Braves vs Padres

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Petco Park

San Diego Padres Manager Mike Shildt Pregame Press Conference

Q. Joe talked yesterday about being really patient coming back and kind of letting that process work out longer than he might have in the past. I was wondering if you could talk to that mentality, because it is kind of a shift for him in the way he likes to operate.

MIKE SHILDT: Yeah, Joe's a pedal-to-the-metal kind of guy, getting after it. Rightfully, he was agreeable to take a little step back. Not to say -- I can't speak for him clearly how he feels with his body -- but he wanted to make sure he got it right and to be able to, when he came back, be able to get to the point where he is now. So I applaud him for that.

Q. In a lot of ways this is a different roster from the one that reported to Spring Training in early February -- Profar, Merrill was called up and then all the acquisitions, Arraez; the trade deadline, Cease -- how big has that been and how did this group go about welcoming all those guys on board? I know with Profar and Merrill they were already there, but just bringing those guys into the fold and making this all work?

MIKE SHILDT: Our roster was clearly in flux. They did a well-documented, tremendous job of putting it together over the season. But there's a lot of questions going into Spring Training, to your question.

The good news is we had a core of guys that have been here and established to be here for a while. So we built off that foundation with Manny and Joe and Bogey and Cronie and Darvish and Tati and Bogey. So that group, that's the pillars. Now we've added to it.

We knew we had a foundation here, and then, like you say, Profar signed during Spring Training and Jackson had been in the organization, counting on and hopeful for him



to break. And he more than earned that clearly with the way he played in Spring Training. And then we add Dylan at the end.

But talk about the guys from the Yankees -- King and Vasquez and Brito and, of course, Higgy and that group -- there's a lot of new faces here.

So we were able to work with our leadership group, the players, the core group, and make sure that -- and our staff, of course, I'm a new manager. And it took a while. And we had a shorter Spring Training to go to Korea.

We had a lot of moving parts. We took advantage of the days we had prior to Spring Training and intentional about the days we had during Spring Training and intentional about the days we had -- when we were talking to Tony on the radio show last week about the first half, being essential in those days that allowed us to continue to build and get better as we went.

Q. Can you speak to just generally your mindset in a Game 2 where you have a 1-0 lead? It's not do or die, per se, but obviously you want to attack it like it is. What's your mindset there?

MIKE SHILDT: We're going to play to win. We're going to get after it. I mean, it's great what we did last night, but it's only as good as following up with one more.

Q. Pitchers over the years have really praised Ruben and his impact on them. From your perspective, the first year with this team, what's he done that's helped the staff so much?

MIKE SHILDT: Ruben's been great. Ruben and Ben Fritz, our bullpen coach; Peter Summerville does a lot of our game planning -- but Ruben, he's got a nice, beautiful blend of all the things that we use now in our sport from a metric, from a technological standpoint -- shapes, spin, game planning, as I mentioned with Peter.

But he also has a feel of people, too, and he's able to individualize it and he does a really, really good job of partnering with, especially our starters of what they are



doing and how they're going about things and how they're attacking and making adjustments as he goes.

He's just got a really, really broad ability to connect to bring things together. So Ruben's done a phenomenal job.

Q. Going back to Spring Training you talked a lot about an identity and how that would evolve over the course of the season. At what point did you start to see the kind of finished product in your eyes that you were looking for at that point in Spring Training?

MIKE SHILDT: Yeah, that's a good question. I always believed, still do, that championship players think and do for themselves. We have a group of players that, I've already mentioned, that clearly have had a lot of success in the game but took the next step to incorporate and then showing and shepherding the rest of the players and worked in concert with the staff, so we could figure out how we wanted to compete every day and how we wanted to continue to be better as the game goes, series goes, the season goes, just a continual growth mindset to that.

So just started to see the synergy take place sometime after the All-Star break, when you started to see everybody kind of getting comfortable with each other. The communication lines were very consistent.

And it got to be really about the greater good of how are we going to win and that being the sole reason for everybody walking in the doors every day in the clubhouse.

Q. In your experience, is that different for each team in terms of the timing of that? Did the season starting as early as it did, did that play a part in all of this?

MIKE SHILDT: Definitely each team has its own rhythm. There's different timing to it. I always feel like every year that's the race that we are working towards, that race of getting everybody on the same page. It's a real challenge.

There's a lot of people with a lot of different -- A.J. Ellis helped with this. Before the season we started talking about this: What are your preferences? We all have our preferences, especially guys that have been doing this for a long time.

And what are your nonnegotiables? And how do we marry it to where you're okay with the preference not being in a team setting? Including myself, by the way, this is not -- it's not like this, it's like this with us. We started the season talking about being together.

But together what are our nonnegotiables as a group and what are we going to stand for? And everybody has to

give something to get that. And that's special. And that's hard to get.

Q. Joe Musgrove obviously has had a lot of success on the mound during his time at San Diego and seemingly been a significant voice inside the clubhouse. I'm wondering in your position this year as his manager, in your eyes, what has Joe's impact on this team been even beyond the mound but inside the clubhouse?

MIKE SHILDT: Joe's most impressive part of this season and his impact was when he was not pitching. It really was.

It was a master class and a privilege to see him when clearly disappointed, had a lot of expectations for him and the team going into the season. And when he wasn't on the field competing, he could have easily gone a different direction with his desire, not necessarily desire to come back, because that's just part of Joe Musgrove's DNA; he's going to compete to get back to perform.

But he could have easily disassociated himself with the team a little bit and felt like, hey, what do I have to contribute because I'm not performing. But instead he took the complete opposite approach to it. He stood up and still led by his actions and how he went about things.

He started to get really, really involved with the clubhouse and make sure everybody was, including myself, and it was a partnership that I had with a lot of our players about what's this looking like.

But he really took the bull by the horns and continued to pour into guys and set an example of what we expect here in this organization.

And leading by example is one thing. He does it very, very well. And he was able to lead without actually performing on the field for a couple of months. It was impressive. Big part of why we're here.

Q. What's the most excited you've ever seen Kyle Higashioka?

MIKE SHILDT: That's a fair question. Pretty stoic. But he's got fire. Let's don't mistake that. Higgy's got some fire to him. But he keeps everything very even keeled.

I just appreciate the way he competes, a very consistent competitor. But I can't say there's one moment that I've seen that he's been overly demonstrative. It's a great trait.

Q. What did you know about him when you got the

job? When he came over has he surprised you in any way just getting to know him?

MIKE SHILDT: You know, you do your homework, you do your due diligence. And then you have people in the industry that reach out to you. It's a combination of reaching out to people you know, having people reach out to you and across the board, even before the trade, because I was there during the winter meetings when that trade was going down.

There was just consistency. Talk about his ability, his ability. You can evaluate that. Clearly it's been good. It's helped us.

But also just the makeup, the quality of person, the anchor of who he is and how he goes about things in the clubhouse, keeps a good vibe, plays his guitar. He has a good sense of energy about him. He's got a nice sense of humor.

He's just been a real asset in the clubhouse as advertised. And everything positive that people said about him is true across the board and maybe more so.

Q. Last year there was a lot of talk about tensions in the clubhouse, tensions between A.J. and Mel. When you took over, were there elements of things you had to clean up to get set and go on the path that you guys are on now?

MIKE SHILDT: I think it was maybe over-sensationalized to some degree from my chair. I can't speak to some of the personal relationships because I wasn't privy to them.

But I can tell you from an A.J. standpoint I've always gotten along with A.J. We don't always speak exactly in agreement, but we have healthy conversations and healthy dialogues back and forth and end at a spot where we're going to do it together.

As I alluded earlier, there's going to be some give and take with that. It's been a healthy relationship like most of them are.

And the role of the players, it's a good group of guys, man. It's a group that cares tremendously. The biggest thing we're able to do is just, again, get together with everybody and figure out what we stood for and realize if this was going to happen and we were going to get the most out of our talent and our club, we needed to do it together and we need to be able to have some sacrifice individually for the collective group.

And that partnership's been fantastic. It's only grown. I

applaud our clubhouse highly for that. They've been nothing but first class, first rate -- not only in the clubhouse but also in our community. This is a group, Manny is our nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award, well deserved. And I get the privilege of watching these guys get in the community. And they're serious of representing Padres in a first-class manner.

And they've done nothing but that. And it's a great group. I'm privileged to be their manager.

Q. You've been here for years. How many has the shadow of Peter Seidler hangs over all of it?

MIKE SHILDT: That's in our fabric. It's in my fabric. It's in that clubhouse fabric, the organization's fabric. Rightfully so.

Listen, it's a part of who we are. And thankfully it's a part of who we are because he set the bar high but he also showed the way about it, being about caring for each other and loving each other, being a part of the community, and just a special human being.

Peter's with us in spirit and he's with us in his legacy of what he left for us to uphold.

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