

NL Division Series: Mets vs Phillies

Friday, October 4, 2024

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Citizens Bank Park

Philadelphia Phillies

Manager Rob Thomson

Workout Day Press Conference



ROB THOMSON: Possibly, yeah. We'll just take it case-by-case and day-by-day, and go from there. But, yeah.

Q. How exciting is it for Aaron Nola to pitch a Game 3 and maybe potentially even a clinching game?

ROB THOMSON: Aaron Nola, you probably won't see any different type of excitement out of him pitching Game 1, 2, 3, Spring Training game. He's calm, poised. He doesn't show much emotion. But I'm sure he's just excited to pitch in the playoffs.

Q. In '22 you guys had a very similar run to what the Mets went through this year, and you came back from a big deficit early on, you went on a good roll, had to fight like crazy to get to the playoffs. Did that make you guys a more dangerous team? Do you recognize that in a team like the Mets because you guys went through the exact same thing and know what it takes to do that?

ROB THOMSON: Sure. As I said when we were in London, do not fall asleep on the New York Mets because they're very talented, and they are. They can beat you in a lot of different ways. They're a good club, well managed. They can steal bases when they need to. Defense is solid, starting pitching is really good.

So, yeah, you know, they're on a roll. And you can lose it, as you well know, watching us last year against Arizona, you can lose it awfully quick. It's all about the next day starting pitcher. But we've got a good club.

Q. To follow up on that, I know this has been a message of yours in the past, but given the remarkable resiliency with some of the craziest comebacks, how much of a message is it now or will it be over the next 24 hours that if you get a lead, pile on, pile on, pile on?

ROB THOMSON: It's always the message. It's the constant message. Doesn't matter who you're playing. The game is about control in the strike zone. If you do that you're going to win a lot of games. Once you get the lead, then you keep going, and you keep putting pressure on the

Q. Rob, do you have a Game 2 starter for us?

ROB THOMSON: Yes, it will be Cristopher Sanchez.

Q. Just explain a little about that.

ROB THOMSON: Just looking at playing the Mets, going into Citi Field, I think it's going to be a pretty hostile environment. And looking at Sanchez' home road splits, I just thought it was really the smartest thing to do.

Q. Also along those lines, last year Sanchez, his first career postseason start was a toss-up between him and Walker, he hadn't pitched in a month and now you're trusting him with Game 2. Talk about his evolution from last year to this year.

ROB THOMSON: It's really amazing the steps that he's taken, the growth that he's had, not only physically, but mentally and emotionally. This guy started the year at 92, 93 miles an hour, really commanding the baseball, and now he's 95, 96, touching 97 and maintaining his command. The changeup is a plus-plus pitch. The slider he's landing, gone deep in the games. Held his composure. Has had some innings where he could have fallen apart, which he's done in the past, and just kept fighting through it, maintaining his composure and poise. He's just grown leaps and bounds.

Q. You said Hoffman had a stiff neck. Any update there?

ROB THOMSON: He's fine. He's going to throw the bullpen today. He's good to go.

Q. The Mets have several left-handed starting pitchers. In this series is that going to force you to utilize more of your roster than you otherwise would?



other club, because they will feel it.

As you see in these short series, the road teams will win a lot of series and sweeps. And I think what happens is, because it's my theory, anyway, the road team hits first, likely to score first, and then the home team or the team that gets behind kind of panics and get out of their strike zone, they try to do too much and it snowballs on them.

So I think that the constant message, it doesn't matter whether it's the start of the year or playoff time is: You get the lead and you put the hammer down and put them away.

Q. Do you know who's starting for the Mets in Game 1?

ROB THOMSON: Not yet.

Q. You said you waited until you knew who you were playing to determine left field and second base. They don't have many lefties in their bullpen. How much will that play into making your lineup decisions?

ROB THOMSON: It will play some into it, but it will be more about the starting pitcher to begin with and then we'll adjust from there.

Q. Given that the Mets are left-handed heavy with their starting rotation, do you expect Hays to get more playing time?

ROB THOMSON: I would think so if that's who they're going to start. We don't know their rotation but there's going to be at least two left-hand starters, I would think. Yeah, he's going to get playing time.

Q. Is he healthy still?

ROB THOMSON: Yeah, everyone is healthy. Knock on wood. Hoff feels good today, Hays feels really good today.

Q. Besides Zack's just talent, is there anything that makes him a particularly good postseason pitcher?

ROB THOMSON: I think his calmness. I don't think he gets rattled at any time. Nola is a lot like that. And that's why he's probably a good Game 3 starter for us going into Citi Field. But I think it's just his poise and his calmness that gives him an edge.

Q. Last two years you guys had to face familiar foes in the postseason, having to do so again this year. How much more of a challenge or what type of different challenge is that for your squad?

ROB THOMSON: I don't know, I think for both of us, from the scouting perspective I think it sort of helps us, because there's not a whole lot of work to do, you're always trying to find an edge. I don't know if there's a disadvantage on one side or the other, really. We just go out there and we know each other, and know each other very well. And you have to make some adjustments here and there, and, you know, go out and play our game.

Q. How do you feel that you guys handled the five days off? Did you get everything out of it you wanted?

ROB THOMSON: Yeah, I was real happy with it. I was real happy with the focus of the guys coming in. We gave them Monday was off. Tuesday was a full workout with a lot of high-velocity machine work in the cages for our hitters. You're a little bit more concerned about the hitting and the timing of the hitters as opposed to the pitching side.

But we had a lot of high-velocity work on Tuesday. A lot of breaking ball work, heavy velocity breaking ball work. Wednesday was the inner squad game and that went really well. I really loved the intensity of it. The guys played really well for five innings.

Yesterday was an optional workout and most of the guys came in and got help with a lot of velocity work in the cages. And here we are today.

So I really liked the prep that the guys put in. Kevin and his staff did a great job in the hitting side. I feel like we're ready to go.

Q. The last two years a lot was made out of them looking sluggish coming off of the bye. Did you talk to anybody or try to approach this week differently in any way now that you're on the other side of it?

ROB THOMSON: Yeah, we talked -- we did a lot of study on other teams, what they did, and put our own plan together. So there was a lot of running in the outfield, sprint work, trying to keep their legs moving, again, the velocity work for timing, and the inner squad game to get some competition going. So, you know, we think we put a pretty good plan together. We'll see.

Q. Bryce has been dealing with the elbow over the last couple months. Over that time span have you noticed pitchers attacking him a different way and how confident are you in his ability to rise above the challenge?

ROB THOMSON: I'm really confident no matter what,

especially this time of year. I don't think his elbow is bothering him now. I'm not sure if pitchers went after him any different than they did before.

He's a guy that tends to rise to the occasion. I'm confident and hoping that he does the same.

Q. Has the five days off really helped the elbow?

ROB THOMSON: I would think so. I don't think it could hurt. He looked really good. He had a line drive home run to left field that got 20 feet off the ground, maybe, in that inner squad game, so he looked really good.

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