

NL Division Series:

Mets vs Phillies

Monday, October 7, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Citi Field

New York Mets

Manager Carlos Mendoza

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. What's it going to be like to finally play at home again in the playoffs?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Great. Feels like we've been on the road forever. But the fact that we're here and we have a great opportunity to not only be back but playing meaningful games, playoff games here in October in front of our fan base is exciting. It's awesome. I can't wait for tomorrow.

Q. Before you guys left, the last home game against the Phillies, fully expecting to be back here. You had to go through a lot to get back to this. Does it feel like an accomplishment just that you're back here?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, look, obviously we're back, you know, and we knew it wasn't going to be easy. We had to go through a lot, not only traveling but playing good teams. We needed to get to the playoff, then advance, and win that Wild Card.

But I always have faith on the guys, on the players. We continued to believe. We took it one day at a time, one series at a time, and that's what we'll continue to do. Here we are, back at Citi Field with a tremendous opportunity to win a series and keep going.

Q. You've always had that even-keel, things are going to turn around. Every manager has that. What is it about this team that they were able to respond to that and do what they've done?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I'm going to go back to say we've got good players. We've got great people. People that they believe. They believe in each other. There's a lot going on behind closed doors that makes that group such a special group. They care and they just -- they're altogether. They have come a long ways. The fact that we got off to such a rough start and we came through -- we



had to face adversity from the very beginning that I feel like made that group stronger. And we keep taking punches and we keep finding ways to get back up after a tough loss.

Those are the expectations, we'll show up the next day. We continue to be ourself. We continue to care about each other. Continue to prepare. Continue going out there competing and see what happens. But that's a special group there, quality players and quality people.

Q. And secondly, after the last month, month and a half is reminiscent of 2022. One concept between the two of them is that Eric Chavez was the hitting coach then, and it looks like the two-strike approach is back. What has Eric Chavez meant to this group as far as hitting?

CARLOS MENDOZA: A lot. But he also had really good players. To be a good coach, a good manager, you need good players, and we've got a lot of it. Not only Chavez but Barnes and the whole group. I think they work really well together. Their ability to listen and bounce ideas off each other.

I think it comes down to players going out there and executing. We can sit here and go over hitters meeting and talk all we want, but you've got to go out there and do it. They're doing it. Credit to the players, credit to the coaches for being on the same page, to challenge each other, and putting together some good game plans.

But at the end, they've got to go out and do it. Just proud of the whole group. It's not done, we've still got work to do.

But it's exciting with the way we're approaching some of these elite teams with elite pitching. We're facing another good arm tomorrow. Their bullpen is really good.

So, yeah, they're going to make adjustments and we have to be ready to make adjustments. Hell of a job by Chavez, hell of a job by Barnesy, and again, the players.

Q. The last time you guys were at Citi Field was so long ago that you really weren't sure what you might get out of Francisco Lindor. He was still going through a lot of the stuff, the diagnosis, the shots. From where



he's come from then to now, did it just far exceed what your expectations were? I know you were cautiously optimistic?

CARLOS MENDOZA: A hundred percent for him to get to the point to where he's at right now. He still feels it once in a while. But he's in a way better spot. You've got to give him credit. You've got to give the training staff a lot of credit because there was a lot of hours. There was a lot of hours, a lot of work put in to get Lindor not only in a position where he was a player, but an elite player. Yeah, last time I was here I didn't know if I was going to have a player, I was going to see Lindor. Not only we saw him, but the way he's playing, the way he's performing. Yeah, it wasn't easy but they grind through it. You have to be proud of him, the whole group has to be proud.

Q. To think you would have had to try to do what you did without Lindor seems kind of impossible after what he's done for you?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, he's an MVP. Not only what he does on the field but what he does behind closed door. He cares so much. He wants it so much. And the joy. The hardest part for me was not seeing that smile when he was going through it, when he wasn't a player for us. Not only that he wasn't a player for us, but he wasn't progressing the way he would like to. And that for me was kind of like -- but like I said, proud of him and I'm just glad that he's playing and playing well for us.

Q. When you look back at these last two weeks, how do you think being on the road so long brought this team closer?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I think not only the last two weeks, but the month of August, we went twice to the west coast. Yeah, you do so much together, where if you're only playing, at the hotel, you go out and have dinners when you're allowed to. You just come a lot closer. But this is a group whether we're home, whether we're on the road, they stick together. They find a way to just, as a group, continue to have conversations, continue to keep it loose, continue to push when they have to and taking the losses and getting back on the bus as opposed to everyone going different places. And you continue to talk about the game and what are some of the adjustments you have to make the next day in order to get the job done I think has helped. But I'm excited to be back. I'm glad we're back home now.

Q. As a manager how rewarding is it when you see that chemistry that's being built off the field translate, obviously, on to the field?

CARLOS MENDOZA: That's what you want, as a

manager, as a coaching staff, that's the goal that you've got to get that group to believe in each other and have each others' back. And from Day 1 in Spring Training was that we needed to be a family. And everybody is going to go out and say that. You've also got to go out and do it, work for it every day. And they've done it. Like I said, even when we were going through those tough days, you could see it, that it was something special. And here we are. So just got to continue doing the same thing we've been doing.

Q. Alvarez has a very long and successful track record against Nola. He's faced him since going back to college. How much stock do you put in that, how much do those things matter and show up in big games?

CARLOS MENDOZA: They're familiar, but as much as Pete knows Nola, he knows him well, too. This is a game of adjustments. And Big League players and really good Big League players they are able to do that. I'm pretty sure Nola is going to make some adjustments and Pete is going to make some adjustments and he will. You've got to go out there with a plan. Nola is going to go out there with a plan, see what happens. It's a playoff game. It's just different. Yeah, there's history there, but like I said, we've got -- Pete has got to be ready and he will, to adjust when he needs to.

Q. In the playoffs how did you and Jeremy envision of Peterson's role?

CARLOS MENDOZA: We'll see, I think we're going day-by-day, game-by-game, how he's bouncing back. It's going to be his second day. We have to see how he's feeling tomorrow and if he's available for us out of the bullpen we'll use him if we need to. He's flexible, he's fluid. So if we need to make a start and he's fully rested up for it, we'll use him that way. But we're going to continue to treat it as day-by-day, game-by-day, and if he's available and we feel like we want to use him, we'll use him.

Q. Being a utility pitcher of sorts, lately maybe moving forward what does that do to a bullpen that does have some question marks?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, it's huge, especially from the left side, having another lefty there. But a guy that he's been one of our best starters. And then we ask him to get a save to clinch and win a Wild Card series, and a day later we're asking him to come in the middle of a game and give us a couple of innings, gave us three, 50 pitches, kept us in the game. A big reason we won that Game 1. I think he's just having a feel. And Pete has got to be honest with us, not trying to be the hero here. Health is important. We will

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

protect him because, again, this is a starter that we now put in a bullpen role. But again, we'll see how the series unfolds and we'll go from there.

Q. All your years of baseball have you ever been involved or seen a string of games like last week?

CARLOS MENDOZA: No, no. It's incredible. I think you could write a book. You could make a movie, you know. You go back to that game in Atlanta, the way we won to clinch a playoff spot. Then we go to play in a Wild Card series, and the way we came back and won the series. The first game in Philly, you know, being shut down for 8 innings and coming back and getting the W. And the way we lost the game yesterday. We've been on the good side and now on the bad side. Incredible week. But that's what makes baseball such a beautiful sport and probably the best sport. You can't predict baseball, you just have to enjoy it. There's going to be ups and downs and that's part of it. And now here we are, you know? Getting ready to play in Citi Field and hopefully we continue to write our own story.

Q. So how is Senga feeling after the last outing?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Good. He continues to feel good. He's here now. He's doing everything that he has to do to continue to feel that way. So progressing well and in a good spot.

Q. Do you think he could be an option for Game 5?

CARLOS MENDOZA: As for right now it's trending in that direction.

Q. Seems like whether you guys pitch to Harper or around him he finds a way to do damage. What makes him so uniquely difficult to get out?

CARLOS MENDOZA: He's Bryce Harper. He's a really good player and really good hitter. He's ready always for that first pitch. He's going to attack. And if you make a mistake he's going to make you pay. And not only in the zone but if you close him off in the zone he's still going to find a way to put barrel. That's what makes that team a dangerous team. The guys in front of him. The guys behind him. That's a deep lineup. It's versatile. They use the whole field. There's a reason why they won the division the way they did, not just because of Harper, they've got a lot of good hitters.

Q. Regardless of tomorrow's outcome, will Quintana start Game 4?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Quintana is going to be Game 4.