

NL Division Series: Dodgers vs Phillies

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Citizens Bank Park

Los Angeles Dodgers Andrew Friedman Pregame 1 Press Conference



Q. I know we've talked a lot about just Tyler and Clayton Kershaw going to the bullpen. Of course, Tyler hopefully will have that Game 4 start. But when you look at them in this role right now, how beneficial has it been considering the seasons they've had and the boost they could add to that group?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: It's big. We talked about it in the last round. I think one real strength of this roster is our starting pitching, because when you're in a position where Emmet Sheehan can pitch out of the pen; Clayton Kershaw; last round, Glas -- it speaks to that depth. Those guys are really talented. And I can see factoring in and helping us win a series.

Q. At what point during Roki's rehabilitation process during the year did it become apparent to you that using him as a legitimate weapon out of the pen in October was a possibility?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I think it kind of goes back to early in the season, delivery was kind of out of whack a little bit, and we've seen it a lot with guys, guys that have had hamstring injuries or oblique injuries or different things, that in that buildup there's subconscious protection of that. And sometimes deliveries can get somewhat out of whack, and that becomes kind of muscle memory and it's hard to unwind.

And you couple that with a player coming over from Japan, and us, it takes time to build a relationship. It takes time to create that trust. And then you compound that with some shoulder soreness, and I think all of it kind of led to this process where we ended up in a really good spot. But it takes some time.

The biggest and most important thing was getting him back feeling right. Once that happened, then it was, okay, let's attack the delivery and try to get that back in place.

It took a little while, but I think once we saw that click is where it was like, okay, this is a very viable option to be a really talented pitcher who can help us get really important outs.

Q. With Shohei's, the two-way thing, both what it does for the roster and what he provides on the field, does that become even more pronounced in a postseason setting with roster flexibility, gives you the ability to manage his workload a little bit easier with the days off that are baked into a postseason schedule? Does it become especially effective this time of year?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah. I think it's certainly helpful. I think, for Sho, we can't even begin to fathom what it's like to do both things, especially with the added intensity of the postseason.

So I think getting a day off between games 1 and 2, after Game 2, I think it's all helpful. There's no question it's taxing. It's taxing on everybody. And then you layer on his ability to do both, and it's challenging.

And I'm glad last year he got to experience the adrenaline of October, with just hitting. And now this year we get to layer both on. I think in some weird way it's actually beneficial. But I think the days off certainly are helpful.

Q. Will Smith obviously ahead of getting hurt, the year he had was a cut above even his last two All-Star campaigns. Two questions. One, I'm wondering what you saw that allowed him -- the batting average went up, the exit velocity went up -- but also just in terms of playing time, DHing is not an option, obviously. So you got Dalton. You've got Will signed long term. How do you see all that shaking out? And how do you figure out what the right workload is for him going forward?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I think the last two years going into this year he's had great years, but a little bit of a fall-off late in the year. So we've been conscious of kind of workload and how to manage that. Having Rush definitely helped with that some.



I think just managing that all a little bit better I think allowed him to kind of sustain that high level of play longer. Unfortunately, he had the fluke injury with the foul ball off his hand.

But he's in a good spot. We've had the chance to kind of ramp him up, get him some live at-bats and do things. Now there's no replicating what you go through in a nine-inning game. So we'll have to figure out how to do that and get him in a position where he can resume what he does because he's such an important part of our team.

Q. Long term?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Long term, he'll continue to be a very important part of our team. I don't know. I'm so focused on right now.

Q. How much of the appreciation have you gained over the last couple years of Shohei's, his relationship with pitching specifically and that part of his game?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I've said this a lot. I think he's underrated. I just don't think the human brain can comprehend what he does and how difficult it is and how elite he is at both -- and the passion he has for hitting and the passion he has for pitching. It doesn't seem like there's enough passion to go around. But there is with him.

And he really cares about being great at everything he does. So watching his rehab process and that buildup and just how focused he was, how intent he was every day on the work he was doing to get himself back in a position to be able to go take the ball and pitch really well.

It wasn't just about pitching for him. It was about pitching really well. So nothing surprises me anymore, but yet everything still surprises me. He's just one of a kind.

Q. You said a couple weeks ago you said you think he's one of the best pitchers in the National League. When did you start to see that he was back to that point after surgery?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I think you could see glimpses of it with certain games, with a couple pitches being there and a couple not, and then the next game he had other things working. You see that with guys, and it's just about how to sync it all up.

So it's not surprising to me that he did. And once he had that full arsenal working, he's a really tough at-bat. And just the compete is so great, that you take that combination and it equals really good things.

Q. The numbers say your lineup isn't particularly vulnerable to left-handed pitching despite Ohtani, Freeman, Muncy. What are the challenges facing three consecutive left-handed starters in this series?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I mean, it's not even just the left-handedness. They're really good. So even beyond handedness, those guys are really good. One of their strengths is their starting rotation. One of our strengths is our starting rotation.

Watching those two worlds collide I think will be great. There's some nostalgia around these kind of starting-pitching match-ups. Those guys are really good. And I think we've gotten a chance to see them a few times, which is helpful.

And I think our guys do a really good job of kind of understanding our game plan and sticking to it. Our offense has really come to life. It's not an easy lineup to navigate. But obviously those guys are going to be a real challenge.

Q. There are some guys who have been so distinguished in their roles that I wonder if teams have to worry about asking them to do something else? The guy I'm asking about specifically is Kershaw, who has been so distinguished. Any trepidation at all about asking him to work in relief?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I would say there obviously always is of someone to that stature. But to Kersh's credit, he cuts off that timidity in a way by saying, hey, I'm here to win, whatever it takes. He's loved watching these guys compete. Obviously he's done really well this year as well.

Usually, when a guy's on his way out, it's like, okay, it's time; you can kind of see it, the performance really backs up. That's not the case with Kersh. He was a big part of the success we had this year. But to his credit, he cut it off really early and just said, hey, I just want to be part of this and help this team win, whatever way I can. And so he helped make that conversation way easier.

Q. As you become one of the more tenured head of baseball operations in the sport, how has your relationship with Dave Dombrowski evolved over the years?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Dave and I have had a really good relationship. We have never really been in the same division kind of going at it and have only squared off once, I think, in the playoffs, in '18. I think that.

But had a really good relationship. He was already fairly seasoned when I came in, and it's been a good relationship and has continued. I think we communicate really well together. And obviously there are certain guys that it's easier to trust when they say something, and Dave is certainly at the top of that list.

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