

NL Division Series: Dodgers vs Phillies

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Dodger Stadium

Los Angeles Dodgers

Kiké Hernández

Pregame 3 Press Conference

Q. Since that game in Baltimore where you guys lost the no-hitter in the ninth, you're like 19-5. Was that game galvanizing in a way? Was it a turning point in a way? Was it just one of those coincidental things that happens during the course of the year? And what do you point to that's different in the last three weeks since then?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I wouldn't say it's coincidental. I don't know. I think a key for us is starting pitching has been unreal. Obviously the last couple of weeks I feel our offense has come together as a group and we're operating, firing on all cylinders as far as being one unit instead of nine different hitters.

But as far as that being a turning point or whatnot, honestly, I didn't notice; I think it's just a coincidence.

Q. You mentioned in the past that you visualize each game before and you'll write it down. Have the last few games gone according to plan?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I don't necessarily visualize like outcome, I just put myself in a position of success so that I kind of go into the day feeling good about it. And it's easy to get those anxious nerves during playoff games right before the game. I feel like if you visualize yourself having success over and over again, it helps calm you a little bit. Fear of failure kind of, not necessarily goes away a little more, but you're not thinking about it as much.

They have gone according to the way I've seen it as far as us winning the games, so maybe that way. I don't think anybody had it scripted the way the last few games have gone. But I'm just really glad we won both games.

Q. After 2023, there was a lot of talk about just the offense's inability to get going in October and what it sort of took to do that. What do you think has been the



difference last October and this October to get more consistent confidence out of you guys?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: We've scored more runs. We've gotten a timely hit. I obviously was here in '23, but I wasn't here the previous two postseasons. So I don't necessarily know what happened or how it went down or what was going on. I can only attest and speak about the times where I was here.

'23, the bye week happened, and then we got off to a rough Game 1. And then it felt like we weren't able to regain momentum as far as punching back because of the awkward day off after Game 1 like we had this year.

But last year was just a matter of not looking back and just looking, living in the moment and taking it one pitch at a time.

I feel like last year we started growing really well after Game 4 of the NLDS. Then this year, we had to play through the finish line. And I think that might have been something that helped us out. And then we got to play the Wild Card round, which, the Cincinnati Reds, if you look at it, in a best of three series, we could have run into a buzz saw as far as facing Hunter Greene, Lodolo and Abbott. Of course, we only faced one of those guys.

But it didn't allow us to check out or relax or anything. We had to stay locked in and we were able to take care of them in two games. We had success as a group as an offense, and then we didn't get too many days off going into Philly.

That's a really good team on that other side. It was just a matter of staying patient and understanding who we are and that it's just a matter of time. And that's kind of how it went.

Q. When you talk about the offense being one unit as opposed to nine guys, how does that kind of show itself during these games?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I think it's doing the little things, whether it's advancing a runner or working a pitch count.



Something as simple as working a pitch count when the guy ahead of you got out early. That is a team at-bat. And when you're taking team at-bats for nine guys, different results tend to happen.

Even when things aren't going right, you're playing the game the right way. And when you're taking team at-bats and you're playing the game the right way, the game tends to reward you. It doesn't always work that way, but that's what it seems like it's doing for us now -- whether it's Freddie taking second base on Castellanos' -- on his base hit that he turned into a double, or Will Smith just being ready, YOLO, right there, two outs, not trying to do too much. Just trying to do something, get a base hit.

That ball that I hit really far into shortstop, just putting the ball in play, little things like that. Those are the things that when, for us, in the past, when we're not clicking as a group, we're not moving runners over, we're having a lot of empty innings, we're not putting the ball into play when we have to put the ball into play -- just little things like that are the ones that can bury an offense.

And right now that's what we're focusing on is just taking one pitch at a time, take what the game gives you and just doing everything to add a point to the scoreboard.

Q. Is there someone on the team who can set the tone in terms of being calm and patient and not pressing and sticking to the approach?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: Like one individual in particular?

Q. When you say hitting is contagious, when that patience also becomes contagious, is there someone in this lineup who sets the tone for you guys?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: It's nice when Shohei hits a homer to lead off the game.

But I think it's an advantage to have such a veteran group as far as the pitchers and player-wise. We're pretty salty when it comes to our position players, except for Pages. And I think you just watch the game and you pay attention, and it comes with experience.

And then if we're not doing it, then we've got nine guys that can use their voice, and it only takes one guy to realize it. Whoever that is that day, when our teammates talk, we listen. We respect each other highly. And we've played in a lot of big games together.

So we rely on each other big time during any point of the game. So I think whoever realizes, at the moment, it's the one guy. But it doesn't necessarily need to be one

particular guy.

Q. Earlier Max was asked just about momentum and whether it's a real thing or not. How important is it just to kind of ride that wave or that feeling as you all are coming together so well right now, especially when it comes to looking to close out this series tonight?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I think it's big. I think for us, obviously, it's way better to be up 2-0 than to be down 0-2 or being tied 1-1. We also understand that what he have in front of us, as far as like the team on the other side, that's a team that, you know, every pitch tonight they're playing like there's no tomorrow because there's literally no tomorrow for them.

For us, it's about coming out the same way. That's a team we don't want to let get hot. That team can get hot. That team can get hot and run through a month, like, before you know it.

So for us, it's just a matter of setting the tone earlier, trying to punch first and try to keep adding on to where we bury them. But I think it doesn't necessarily -- with our starting pitching, it's hard to say we have the right guy on the mound, because you can say that about any of the guys. But I feel like with Yoshinobu on the mound, we feel really good about our chances.

It seems like a lot of times the last two years when there's been a chance to clinch, it's been him on the mound. San Diego, I think he did game three or four against the Mets. But if we came back, I think if there was a Game 7 it might have been him. And last year, World Series, if we came to a Game 6, it would be him. And first round, Wild Card, it was him on the mound.

I feel like he's the right guy at the right time, and hopefully he can get some quick outs in the first inning. And we can get up early and keep adding on. I feel like I sound repetitive, but we're going one pitch at a time. And you never know in the playoffs which pitch is going to win you a game.

Q. You mentioned 2023, when you fell behind and really weren't ever able to get any kind of momentum going, which is essentially where the Phillies are right now. Even though this is not a must-win for the Dodgers tonight, how important do you think it is to try to just end this thing tonight so they don't get any kind of momentum going?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I mean, the quick answer is it's as important as if we win, they go home, and we move on to the next one.



But the way my mentality is the way our mentality is, every game in the playoffs is a must-win game, whether it's Game 1, Game 2, Game 3. Doesn't matter what series we're playing in, every game is a must-win game because you're putting yourself in a hole if you don't win a game.

A team that dangerous, you don't want to give them any signs of life, any signs of hope. Tonight is huge for both teams.

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