

NL Championship Series: Mets vs Dodgers

Saturday, October 12, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Dodger Stadium

New York Mets

Manager Carlos Mendoza

Workout Day Press Conference



Q. Do you have a starting pitcher for Game 1?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Kodai Senga is going to start Game 1.

Q. Do you expect him to go maybe three innings, something like that?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah.

Q. And then you'll see behind him or do you have, do you think it will be Peterson?

CARLOS MENDOZA: No, we'll see. We'll see how the game unfolds. And everybody should be available and ready to go. It will be Senga and then we'll see after that.

Q. You obviously had three pretty reasonable options. What made you land on Senga?

CARLOS MENDOZA: From the beginning, we wanted to put our guys in what we felt was the best position to have success, right, considering where they're at physically, some of the innings, who needs the extra days, who do we want to keep under normal routine.

That was the case for Senga. We wanted to keep it as close as possible to his routine. And with some of the other guys, like I said, because of where they're at, physically, who will benefit from extra days. So we decided to go with Senga, keep Senga on Game 1.

Q. How about games 2 and 3?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I'll give you Game 2. Sean Manaea, so then from there we'll see. Sean Manaea is going to go Game 2.

Q. What have you heard of Jeff McNeil in terms of his availability when the NLCS starts?

CARLOS MENDOZA: He came out good after that game last night, played second base, you guys probably saw it. The whole Game 5 at-bats, said he felt really good.

He's scheduled to play right field today. And we'll see where we're at. But, again, trending in the right direction, feeling good physically, five at-bats, nine innings on the field.

So, like I said, wait until he gets through today's game and then we'll go from there.

Q. If he's okay, do you view him having a starting role or coming off the bench?

CARLOS MENDOZA: We'll see. We'll see. But if he's healthy, there's a good chance he'll be on the roster for sure. Then we'll go from there.

Q. How do you feel about playing the Dodgers?

CARLOS MENDOZA: They're really good. Good team, superstars. They're deep. They faced a lot of adversity just like us. A lot of injuries in their pitching staff, especially, but they found a way.

And we're a good team and we'll be ready to go, but understanding that we're facing a pretty good team there.

Q. You haven't seen them since May, do you look at it as you're a completely different team than the last time you saw them?

CARLOS MENDOZA: They've got a lot of familiar faces. Lineup-wise, pretty much the same guys. And then bullpen, a lot of the same guys we face. So it will be interesting. Seems like they've been using that bullpen a lot with the injuries that they're facing with their starting rotation.

But again they're deep. They're good. They've got good players. They've got a really good manager and good coaches. It will be fun.



Q. With Senga during his various buildups and even when he's come back, you've been very set on pitching him on the sixth day at the soonest. Would he be able to go on normal Major League rest now?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Hopefully that's the case.

Q. You're looking at him because it's a question of Game 5. I'm sure you guys looked at it?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yes. And we discussed pretty much every scenario. Like, if we go, who goes Game 1, who goes Game 2, Game 3, potential games 5, 6, 7, if we need to go that route. So he's got to get through -- he starts on Sunday and then we'll continue to monitor him the following days. But he should be good to go.

Q. What does he think about going on normal rest?

CARLOS MENDOZA: He's good to go. He wants what's best for the team and he's going to let us know. But as of right now he feels good and we're going to go with him.

Q. More generally with the pitching this round how much of a luxury is it to be able to line it up whichever way you want, which obviously not every team gets to do?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, we still are facing a the really good team. We've got to go out there and execute. But I think overall, especially what we went through the past two weeks or so, with so much traveling and playing that many games on the road, not only for the starting rotation but for our bullpen, it was good to have these couple of days off.

But it was nice to have these conversations and have some choices and options. But I don't put too much into it because we've still got to go out there and play well.

Q. (Indiscernible) Lindor already had an MVP regular season, counting the Atlanta game as a playoff game now. Have you seen if not a different gear for him but just kind of a different mission just with the stakes being higher now with these games?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I think I've seen a different gear probably three months ago. But the one thing is he's calm, especially after those big swings. Like he's done it before. And it's hard to control your emotions in moments like the way he's coming through.

So I think I just see a more mature player, there is control in his emotion. He's calm. And he continues to perform.

Like that extra gear, I think that's Francisco Lindor. And

this is a guy that probably early in his career he was playing in a lot of playoff games, a lot of meaningful games, even the World Series. He's been in these moments. He knows what it takes.

People will feed off of that, too. So important to have, not only Lindor, but some of the guys that got playoff experience that can share some of the way they approach certain situations. So definitely Lindor, special player, man.

Q. With him having done it in October, like you mentioned in Cleveland, Carlos, is that something that a player is real, like, they've already done it so they're more prone to do it again? They know what to draw on?

CARLOS MENDOZA: He's a superstar. He's a superstar. He's one of the best players in the game. There's a reason why. But the one thing with him, man, he works really hard. Like his routine, his preparation, he's always doing something, whether physically, going through video work or going through scouting reports, in the training room, in the weight room, talking to our trainers.

Like this guy is special. He's pretty amazing what he does not only on the field but off the field. Again, this is a superstar here that we get the privilege to watch him play and perform day in and day out, especially in October.

Q. Last time you guys saw the Dodgers probably your rock bottom. Does it feel full circle now that you have to go through them?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I guess, but it's a long season. We played them early, especially in May when it was hard for us. And, look, here we are. Getting another opportunity to face a really good team.

And it will be fun. That's for sure. There's going to be a lot of superstars, on the field, two fan bases that are intense.

I'm not going to put too much where we were struggling, we hit rock bottom in May, we were facing them. That's baseball. It happens a lot of times you're going to go through struggles. When we played them -- we played them well in LA. And then they came here and they beat us. But here we are.

Q. Did the last game against them, did it feel like a turning point for you?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, that was the game, the team meeting, I guess, right? So, yeah, you could say that -- I mean, turning point, like, we've been through a lot. But the

fact that after that game, that's when the guys got together and we started turning the corner. So maybe.

Q. When you guys lost Kodai and Jeff in the regular season you said something along the lines it would be a good conversation to have if we get them back, we can talk about it. How does it feel to be in the position to have Kodai start Game 1 and maybe have Jeff play for you this round?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, I think it hit me I think yesterday when we were going through a lot of these conversations and I went back to when I was saying hopefully when I announced that Senga was done for the regular season, and when Jeff gets hit and we get the results. It's broken and it's done, and hopefully we're having this conversation. And here we were yesterday having those conversations.

So it was a good feeling. Pretty incredible, and I'm just glad that they are healthy now. Senga, he's already contributed in the past series. And Jeff is now putting himself in a position where he could be a player in a pretty important series, in a pretty important part of our season.

Q. Sounds like Severino is going to have at least 10-ish days between starts. How do you manage that?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Fine. Because if there's somebody that needs that extra day or extra rest, it's Sevy, especially where he's at with innings and the workload and all that. So I feel -- we feel really good about it. And he's good with it. And, look, we'll see what happens.

Q. Separately, as you go through your game planning for the Dodgers, how do you sort of manage the fact that they have Shohei Ohtani in the middle who can hit basically anyone at any time?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Don't forget Mookie and Freeman right behind him. That's what makes them really good. That's three of the best hitters, and then you've got Teoscar Hernández and Max Muncy and Will Smith -- I can go on and on. Like I said that's a pretty good lineup.

It's deep. They're versatile. They're righty-lefty and they can do a lot of different things offensively. They can hand the ball to the ballclub, they control the strike zone. Not a secret. We'll be ready.

Q. Any special treatment you give a player like that or they're so deep that you almost can't?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Pick your poison kind of thing. You've got a former MVP in Mookie Betts hitting right

behind him, another former MVP in Freddie Freeman. It goes on and on.

The game will dictate how we're going to approach the urgent situations in certain guys. But we'll be ready to go. We'll have a plan. And we've got to go out there and execute and play well and compete.

Q. As a first year manager, is there a shift for you personally in philosophy in terms of decision-making and essentially how you approach a seven-game series as opposed to a five-game series?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yes, once you get to this situation when you're playing playoff games you're going to be aggressive at times. You guys have seen the ways I've used Edwin Diaz in the seventh. I think it was the other day.

Yeah, it's definitely a different style as far as like, how aggressive are you going to be with some of your moves, whether it's pinch runner, pinch running, pinch hitting. It's a different bullpen.

We haven't seen a bullpen with so many right-handed pitchers. So I have to make some adjustments here.

But the game will dictate. The game will tell us. But it's definitely a different way of going about as far as managing a game. But like our preparation, our communication and all that status stays the same.

Q. How does that weigh into the decision of whether to carry an extra pitcher to have an extra position?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Those are some of the discussions that we're having because we're probably going to be facing a lot of their bullpen. And do we need that extra left-handed hitter? Do we need to have that versatility? Do we need to have that extra pitcher because of a seven-game set? So it's fun to have those conversations let's put it that way.

Q. Why did you guys work out here and then fly as opposed to the opposite?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Because, one, we didn't know where we were going. Two, we want to use our facilities and then just kind of get our work in, get on a plane and not having to get off the plane after a 6-hour flight and go to the ballpark.

And so we decided because again we didn't know where we were going and all that, we decided to just stay here, do everything here and then fly and just go straight to the

hotel.

Q. You mentioned all the stars that the Dodgers have. Kike Hernandez becomes sort of a different player in October. When you face a guy like that who seems to step up in October do you treat him differently than you would like in a regular season?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Not really. I mean, he's a really good player. He's been in this league for a long time. I know him well. I coached him in winter ball back in the day in Puerto Rico. And then I saw him in playoff when he was with Boston.

And he seems like he's built for these moments. And that's what I continue to say. That's a deep roster, that's a deep lineup. You're looking at a guy like Kike Hernandez probably hitting down in the bottom of the order and you see what he's done last night, came through again. And he brings a lot of energy. He's a really good player.

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