

NL Championship Series: Mets vs Dodgers

Sunday, October 13, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Dodger Stadium

Los Angeles Dodgers

Manager Dave Roberts

Pregame 1 Press Conference



Q. When you look at just what you saw from Jack Flaherty in Game 2 of the DS, what do you expect to see from him in this Game 1 start? Any adjustments you're looking from him in this matchup against the Mets?

DAVE ROBERTS: I thought there was a lot of good things from Jack last series. I thought the command was better. I think more of the same.

I think just to see him take down some more hitters. He's going to compete. I think he's going to mix and match his sequencing, use his fastball when he needs to, keep them honest in, manage the game, navigate the lineup.

But I think that I just feel he's built for moments like this. I think the pulse, the stuff. I really feel a good one out of Jack tonight.

Q. When you switch from one series to the next this quick, did you spend more hours in the last 24 in meetings or sleeping?

DAVE ROBERTS: Combo, (laughter), certainly combo. It's one of those things that you relish the idea of not sleeping a whole bunch because you have an opportunity to continue to play on.

But I'm fortunate that I've got a great group of people around me as far as on the pitching, run prevention, the hitting side. The front office is grinding to make sure everyone's on the same page. I do make sure I get my rest, though.

Q. Does this feel similar to '21 when you guys went from the Giants series to Atlanta? Obviously the travel component is out of it, but is there anything you learned from that experience that kind of applies to this week?

DAVE ROBERTS: That's a fair question. Yeah, I think with all things, you learn from past experiences. And I think the takeaway is you can't let down your guard or get off the gas.

It was an exhausting series, going back to '21 to kind of beat the Giants and then to get on and play against the Braves. So I don't really know where our head space was at that time.

But I do know that we've got to push on and keep the momentum, play with that same urgency and not get caught up in it's a seven-game series. That just can't happen. So I think that's one thing that we're very mindful of.

Q. Walker Buehler has not been in today. So I take that as a sign he's not pitching until Game 3. And tomorrow will be a bullpen game. Am I wrong?

DAVE ROBERTS: Well, that's a good thought. That is a possibility. I think for us is we're -- honestly, we're trying to figure out the best way to win tonight. I do feel after tonight it will open things up as far as Game 2 and Game 3.

If tonight ends up being an exhaustive bullpen game that could change things. If it goes the way we expect, then maybe your thought comes to pass. We'll see.

Q. How difficult were the roster decisions with Miguel and Vesia?

DAVE ROBERTS: Vesia was pretty easy. We just didn't feel it was even a possibility for Alex to pitch this series. I think he's still in play if we are fortunate enough to get to the World Series.

With Miggy, it was tougher, I think in the sense of he's obviously a huge part of our ballclub. He's playable, but I think we just, as an organization, felt that what he brings to the table as far as elite shortstop defense, we just feel right now physically he's a little bit more compromised, that that can't be brought to the table.

So with Freddie, kind of where he's at physically, with



potentially making a move in the outfield, in left field with a lead, you just kind of have to have pieces that you can kind of mix and match. So we just feel a few more days, another week would get Miggy back to being who he is.

Q. Comparison to the other seasons, that you guys basically are in the postseason and World Series or the edge of the World Series, now you have a weapon in Shohei Ohtani. His first postseason. What has he contributed to the clubhouse on this run in the postseason? If I could please ask you, on behalf of my viewership, your thoughts about Fernando Valenzuela, who is ill, a broadcaster for the Dodgers, if you could give us your words and thoughts appreciate that too.

DAVE ROBERTS: Fernando, I don't know his status I know he's ill and going through things physically. He's in all of our thoughts and prayers. He's a friend of mine. I've kind of stood down, letting the family handle this situation. But I just pray that we get him back healthy and back in the booth. We think about him often.

As far as Shohei on the playoff run, I think he's brought another level of excitement, I think, for everyone in sports, particularly in baseball.

I thought the Padres did a really nice job in containing him. But I still think that he's the best player on the field at any particular time when he's taking at-bats.

So I think for me he's just got to kind of get back into the hitting zone. If he does that, then it bodes really well for the Dodgers.

Q. Just the daily "how's Freddie doing" question?

DAVE ROBERTS: Just saw him briefly. He had a smile on his face, hobbling around a little bit. But I think it's what it is and it's better than yesterday, it's better than it was a couple of days ago.

Our expectation is he starts, takes four at-bats or five at-bats and we win a ball game. But I'm expecting him to start and finish the game. But if we have to defensive replace, we will.

Q. Especially with the way the series is structured, the fact you might have to play three games in three days, is it something you need to manage him playing back-to-back days? Especially tomorrow, being a day game, is that something you're extra mindful of?

DAVE ROBERTS: We're mindful of it, but my message to him was let's get through today. Once we get through today we'll kind of pick up the pieces, see where he's at.

But, yeah, that's definitely thoughtful. We're thinking about that too.

Q. Have you seen a player play with his ankle taped up the way Freddie had it the other night like that?

DAVE ROBERTS: Not in this sport. (Laughter). Maybe on the gridiron. He was spatted up. No, I haven't.

Q. With Senga expected to go short followed by potentially any number of guys, including maybe a lefty in Peterson, how does that complicate what you guys are trying to do personnel and lineup-wise?

DAVE ROBERTS: Yeah, I think the way we can put together the lineup, there's a lot of thought in Peterson and some of the righties, things like that, Megill. I think it's constructed in a way that we can protect guys, make those guys attack to get to certain guys. Yeah, it's predicated on how far he goes. But probably the expectation is three and 45 and we'll see.

Q. With Rojas out, does that mean that Edman will get all the time or majority time in short?

DAVE ROBERTS: He will get all the time at short.

Q. You're facing left-handed starters for the first time -- didn't face any last round. Do you anticipate any sort of maneuvering regarding that in the next few days?

DAVE ROBERTS: I think obviously with the left-handed starter, I think pay haste is going to be in play. So we'll see. I mean, Manaea starting tomorrow. Gavin probably won't be in there and we'll kind of go from there. And obviously we've got to talk to the Freddie thing, too.

Q. You were talking about the '21 series. And you had a lot of challenges going into the Braves because there were a lot of injuries that piled up in that series, including Scherzer, which was a big problem. But overall, would you say this season, because of the constant moving parts and the pitching injuries, that this has been your most challenging season? When I asked Friedman about it, he just said you had done a great job this season?

DAVE ROBERTS: For me, personally, it's been my most challenging season.

Obviously with the injuries and kind of introducing a lot of young players in critical roles, it's always kind of tough. And I think you're in a position where you just have to trust and run guys out there in spots that you don't normally feel

good about, and keeping kind of this whole machine moving forward in a good, positive direction.

But it speaks to kind of the players that we have. We've got a lot of good players and buying into each other. And I think we've heard all the stuff of the watch parties, the bus rides and flying separately. And these guys are kind of really galvanizing. It's fun for me in my chair to see that too.

Q. When you put together a bullpen game like you did in Game 4, how much of that is scripted beforehand? How much do you basically use your own gut to make decisions on things? Is it a combination of things?

DAVE ROBERTS: I think it's a combination of things. I think in that particular case, you have X amount of guys that you really want to use. And in an elimination game, that's kind of how I look at things. And then you kind of try to figure out where it's best for those guys to line up.

But there's some spots you have to figure out you want to see can this guy get through this to get to the next guy. There's some breaking points.

But in totality I have an idea of what I'd like to do, but it doesn't always play out as such.

Q. Like Vesia the other night?

DAVE ROBERTS: Correct.

Q. You just mentioned the challenges you faced this season. During the offseason, Spring Training, how much contingency planning would you be doing from a roster perspective -- if this guy goes down, we'll do this? And maybe how deep are you or beyond some of the contingency planning you might have had coming into this year?

DAVE ROBERTS: We're beyond. We've tapped into depth -- goodness, you look at the roster right now and you look at, certainly on the pitching side, there's three or four guys that I didn't know if they were going to get Major League service this year. They're on a postseason roster in the CS.

That is a lot on the front office. Thankfully, that I get some reprieve and a break and they just -- their biggest thing is trying to plan for the unforeseen and have depth and kind of have young players kind of continue to emerge, so the machine keeps going and doesn't kind of take a step back.

We've needed every bit of it. This has been a tough one. But getting a guy like Teo who posts and Tommy at the

deadline and Kopech, those two additions themselves have been really instrumental, so far, this season.

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