

NL Championship Series: Mets vs Dodgers

Wednesday, October 16, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Citi Field

Los Angeles Dodgers Manager Dave Roberts

Pregame 3 Press Conference



Q. From Yoshi to Flaherty, their first to second outings seems like they've settled in. What do you need to see from Walker today to have similar success to set the tone?

DAVE ROBERTS: I think with Walker, I think actually -- I thought he threw the baseball fine his last time out. We just didn't play good defense behind him.

I think to the question of what I'm looking for, I know the emotions aren't going to be too big for him, the stage. I think it's more of how he's obviously commanding the baseball -- the fastball, the secondary pitches -- but most importantly, it's kind of how those hitters are seeing him and just seeing the at-bats, the quality of contact, the swings that they're taking against Walker. That's kind of for me telling what's more to come. So that's what I'm going to keep an eye on.

Q. What went into flipping Max and Teoscar and dropping Will to seventh?

DAVE ROBERTS: With Will, I just think give him a different look. I don't think he's swinging the bat great. So just to kind of let the game get to him a little bit later.

Severino's typically been a much better versus right. So just to give some lefties more cracks at him. And that's kind of the impetus behind that.

I like the way Max is taking at-bats, and I feel good with him moving up a rung.

Q. We're in a similar situation in Game 3 in San Diego. How would you like to approach this Game 3 differently than you did last week?

DAVE ROBERTS: This one right here, I think, for me, I feel great in the sense of certain guys in our pen have had considerable time off. They're rested.

I guess trying to continue to manage this game with urgency, if it makes sense. And that's obviously dependent on the first couple few innings.

But, yeah, I feel good with Walker throwing the baseball tonight and the guys behind him.

It's an important game. So if you're looking at it as a five-game series, that's kind of how I'm looking at it. So to win this first game is really important.

Q. How is Freddie physically, and how has he been bearing up with the ankle?

DAVE ROBERTS: I think he's doing a great job mentally, trying to stay positive. Although, it's pretty frustrating at times that he can't get out of the woods as far as kind of getting over the hump because he's playing a lot.

But the swelling has dissipated much more than it was a couple days ago. So he's encouraged today. Hopefully, with the weather and being on his legs for nine innings, it won't get too bad or cumbersome.

But he's doing a good job of still taking good at-bats and making the plays defensively that he needs to. And hopefully we can catch a good lead and get him off his feet. But regardless, he's going to be in there.

Q. Did he do anything physically yesterday, or was it all treatment?

DAVE ROBERTS: He got treatment and then he swung a bat. So he took some swings.

Q. Is there a concern about Freddie playing three straight days? And on top of that, I'm assuming you're not considering DHing Freddie and having Shohei play the field?

DAVE ROBERTS: Shohei won't play the field. And I think for us is you're just trying to get through this day and then kind of see how the next days look for Freddie. I don't want to get into the thought of him playing three days or



not playing. That gets a little daunting, I think, in everyone's head. My message to him is let's just focus on today.

Q. Through the years, you've faced every imaginable pitching decision in the playoffs. With the state of your staff this year, what's unique and challenging about 2024?

DAVE ROBERTS: I think what's unique about this year is -- obviously losing Vesia for this series has certainly been a tax. But the bullpen is very neutral. I trust a lot of those guys in the pen. I feel like I can use them, deploy them at any point in time, different lanes, different innings.

The starters, they're different guys. I just really don't feel like -- with Yoshinobu's history recently, hasn't pitched a whole lot. With Flaherty, I feel like we can kind of extend him a little more, which we did. And with Walker, just kind of reading and reacting.

I just think this year, as far as on the starting pitching side, you just don't really have a guy that you're just going to just kind of sit back for seven innings. Not like anybody really does. There's probably a handful of those guys in baseball anyway.

But I still believe, though, in totality, to get 27 outs, we're very, very equipped to do that in totality with our pitching staff.

Q. What is the biggest difference or biggest differences between these current Mets and the ones you saw when you were here in late May when they were struggling?

DAVE ROBERTS: I said it a few days ago. They are a completely different ball club than we saw. They weren't playing good baseball. Lindor is back to playing MVP-type baseball. Manaea had a different arm slot. They didn't have Iglesias on the roster. I think Vientos was up and down at that point in time, so he's hitting two in their lineup. So there's just a lot of different things.

Obviously, with that, they've had a tremendous second half. Won a lot of ball games. And you can see they're playing with a lot of confidence.

Q. Understanding he's pitching tomorrow, what has impressed you or surprised you the most about Yamamoto?

DAVE ROBERTS: The thing that's probably surprised me the most is -- you know, he's pitched in big ball games, so I knew he would step up in a big ball game. So that wasn't

totally surprising, but you still need to see it.

I'd probably just summarize that he's just not physical. That's something that you probably see him and he's not physical in stature. But what he can generate as far as power is pretty remarkable.

Q. I was going to ask about Yamamoto also. Obviously you are hoping he's going to make more than just tomorrow's start in the rest of this postseason, that we'll see him out on the mound again. But just how would you sum up or evaluate his first full season in the big leagues? And how do you think he's handled the current state of your rotation? When he signed and joined the rotation, there were many established big league starters, All-Star starters in that rotation. Now he's one of the few sort of still left standing, which puts some responsibility, maybe pressure on his shoulders. How do you think he's handling that? Obviously we saw how he threw in Game 5, but just from a big-picture perspective.

DAVE ROBERTS: Big picture, I think that the organization, I think from the front office to the coaches, we've done a great job as far as making sure he keeps his routine or his schedule that he's been accustomed to. And that's something that we agreed upon when we signed him.

I think it's been a very good learning year for Yoshinobu in the sense of the grind of a long season, a Major League season; learning hitters, Major League hitters; what plays and what doesn't play.

Having that little injury, kind of being on the IL was tough for him, for all of us. But to come back with such great intent, urgency has been great to see.

And just to get him in the postseason, I think that's been pretty exciting. Those are things he can sort of build on for the next, what, is it, 10, 12 years.

Q. How are we on Daniel Hudson today? Is he available?

DAVE ROBERTS: Huddy is available. Yeah, he feels good. Catch, played, moved around yesterday. He'll be available, yes.

Q. What was his --

DAVE ROBERTS: Lower body, just his lower body wasn't moving well. You just don't want that to affect his arm and certainly performance. That's why we weren't going to pitch him the other night.

Q. Over the next three games, have you decided Flaherty, Game 5?

DAVE ROBERTS: Most likely, yes.

Q. What do you do after that because you'd have Buehler on very short rest. And you'll have to throw at least one more bullpen game, if not two?

DAVE ROBERTS: Well, I don't think I'm going to get to Game 6. So we'll see when we get there. There's a lot of things that obviously you know and I know that can happen from now until Game 6.

So right now, for Game 5 -- or Game 3, I feel really good with our starters going through 3, 4 and 5 and where the pen is at. When and if that time comes, we'll figure out a plan.

Q. You want to win this in Game 5, right?

DAVE ROBERTS: I would love to win this in -- yes.

Q. You are a part of some pretty important LCS history in New York. What's it like to be back in New York in October?

DAVE ROBERTS: Yeah, it feels great. You live to play in October baseball. And certainly this market is always fun. I loved beating that team across town. I think everyone on this side of town does, too.

Yeah, it's great. There's just really no better place. And I'd be rather no place in the world than right here in New York right now.

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