

NL Championship Series: Mets vs Dodgers

Wednesday, October 16, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Citi Field

New York Mets

Dwight Gooden

Darryl Strawberry

Pregame 3 Press Conference



Q. As Met and Yankee, how thrilled would you be to see a Met-Yankees World Series for the first time in 30 years?

DWIGHT GOODEN: For me I think it would be great for New York and great for the city. Obviously it's different leagues but it's still a good rivalry.

In 2000 I was involved in that. I was on the other side with the Mets, which was weird for me, being a player coming in from the visitors dugout, coming in on a bus to Citi Field -- Shea Stadium at that time.

But I think it would be great for the city, great for the fans. I would be excited for it. And, plus, obviously I'd be pulling for the Mets.

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: It would be great. It would be a great opportunity for New York City. After all that everybody's been through, sports bring people together. But you have to do their part.

The Mets have to get through a good Dodgers ballclub. It's not going to be easy.

So the Yankees are doing their part and the Mets are playing tonight and we'll see what happens. But you just hope that it does happen for everyone because you know how everybody is here. They need the bragging rights of who's the best in this city.

Sometimes you would think you would want it by yourself because I remember the times of us playing, we had the city to ourselves when I was playing with the Mets; we didn't have to share with the Yankees. And when I played with the Yankees, we didn't have to share with the Mets.

But they would have to share the city to see who is the

best at this particular time.

Q. '88 was the last time these two teams faced each other in the NLCS. What do you remember from that series? And do you think that '88 club was actually better than the '86 World Series champion team?

DWIGHT GOODEN: I was having a great day until you brought that up. (Laughter).

Obviously from '88, what I remember is the Mike Scioscia home run in Game 5 because if we won that game, we go up 3-1. Obviously I made a bad pitch to Mike Scioscia in the ninth. He hit the home run.

But the '88 on paper was probably better than the '86 team on paper. But I think the '86 team we had chemistry, we had heart. What I mean by that, we were a lot closer than just ball players. We spent more time together than we did with our families at that time.

We spent a lot of time together on the road. I think that plays a big part of getting to know your teammates personally.

So I would I say '88 on paper is probably a little bit better, but the '86 team, I'd put that team against anybody.

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: That's a good point, Doc. The '88 team was more talented than the '86 team. The '86 team had more guts than '88 team. It was just a different breed of players with Ray Knight, Kevin Mitchell, players that didn't fear the situation and the opportunity.

I think the '88 series against the Dodgers was heartbreaking, yeah. I've never gotten over that, of losing that '88 series. But you've got to remember the Dodgers were extremely hot coming in, playing at the end of that season. And they had some big moments -- Scioscia home run, Gibson -- Kirk did hit something, that big home run. They just did things right.

Playoff baseball is about who comes up with the big hit in the big situation and who doesn't. And I think that's what happened in the '88 series for us. But the '86 series, we



had players on the team that sat on the bench. And if you got ahead in ball game against us, we knew we were coming back and would win.

That was the difference. We didn't have that kind of same feeling. The chemistry was different. And, like I said, the '86 team had a lot of guts. We realized that we was not going to lose; we were going to come back no matter what the circumstances was.

Q. Did it make you feel any better or worse that that '88 Dodgers team beat a heavily favored Oakland A's team as well?

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: It made me feel better when they went on to sweep them. It just reminded me, after playing a seven-game series like that and both teams were drained, and pitching was drained. And the Dodgers go on and sweep that Oakland team, which was supposed to be the team of the century that year, better than everybody else.

And kind of made me feel better after seeing that. I kind of just was able to turn it over. It was hard to turn that series over, that 1988 series over. But I had to eventually leave it there and get past it.

But when Oakland beat them -- when they beat Oakland, it made you feel a lot better.

Q. You guys brought up the comebacks from '86. This team obviously does that as well. But anything else of this current team remind you of that '86 team?

DWIGHT GOODEN: I think watching, obviously I was a pitcher, but their lineup is very deep. Our lineup was very deep. Anybody in that lineup can hurt you. It's no one guy you can pitch around and feel comfortable with. And I know being a pitcher, when you're facing people like that there's no breathing room.

Normally when you're facing a weak team, the first three innings you're trying to get yourself together, find your rhythm. But a lineup like what the Mets have, you have to be ready for the first hitter on and go. The Mets have been able to do that for the most part.

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: I think these guys really believe in themselves, which is good. They had a great run at the end of the season to get to this place. Lindor has come up with some big hits for them in crucial situations. That's what it takes.

And I think Pete, with his big home run in Milwaukee, was really a turning point for them as a group. Because it takes

all your guys to be able to perform in those particular situations. And they all did.

That's what it takes to get to this next level to be able to get to the National League Championship and advance and try to get to the Series.

These guys are good in big situations. Vientos is good, young player, he's good. He's not afraid. He's not trying to do too much. Just trying to put the ball in play. He's strong. He can hit the ball to the opposite field like he did. He hit the grand slam the other day. And big home runs in the series against Philly.

They do the little things. They do it just like we did. You get into those situations, you don't have to count on just one particular guy to do it all the time. It's, okay, we play today, we win today. Let someone do it; whoever wants to do it, do it.

That's what baseball is all about, when you get into playoff baseball. It's a short window, short time. It's not guaranteed it's going to always going to be like this for you. And you've got to take advantage of it. And I think they've done a great job of taking advantage of those situations they've been in.

Q. When you guys won in '86, you obviously broke a pretty significant World Series drought in the city. What does it mean or what would it mean for a time like this to break now a 38-year drought as in the New York Mets?

DWIGHT GOODEN: I think it will be a big deal, obviously for the organization, but just for the city of New York. As Darryl mentioned earlier, it was all about the Yankees through the '90s and the early 2000s.

For the Mets to do that and to break the drought I think it would be big for the city, big for the fans, and obviously for the organization.

But I think it's not always the best team that wins, the hottest team when you get in the postseason. But I think this team is built for the future as well, but I'd like to see it happen this year.

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: I would say they would get a lot of free food (laughter) and a lot of free clothes because when you win here the people in this city take care of you. I know that for us when we won in '86 and we came back. We never had to pay for anything.

So it's a great place to win. It's a great place to play. It's a great place to have fun because when you win in a place

like New York City, you are bigger than life because this is a tough place to play and the expectations are real. And once you get a hold of that and you're the champions of the city, the city will embrace you.

Q. You guys mentioned toughness. That '86 team known to be a little bit rough and tumble also known as something of a juggernaut?

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: Juggernaut. We were crazy. We weren't a juggernaut. (Laughter). We were a different breed. We were just who we were.

In the '80s you could be like that. For us, we had a different personality. We had a lot of swagger about ourselves. We didn't care. We didn't care what people think about us. You didn't like us? Oh well.

We had a slogan: What we were going to do? I can't sit here and tell you what it was. But it was a lot of fun being who we were back in those days.

Q. I guess my question is this team is known to be a little quirkiest, a little bit scrappier. Do you see that type of toughness in the current version, in the acceptable version for 2024?

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: Yeah, of course, for now, just acceptable how they are. They're fun to watch. That's the most important thing about them. They're not afraid of the moment. They've learned the moment and they learned how to be in it. And they've learned how to make the best out of it.

And when you get to that place, you're going to be good. Their future is bright with the younger players that they have coming through the organization, and they've got a chance to be just like we were every year.

We had a young group that would come through the farm system and play at the highest level here and have a chance to win. So they will have a chance to win moving forward. I don't think this is just a one-time hit for them. I think they're headed in the right direction in what they're doing over here with the front office.

David Stearns and all that he's doing, he has a great knowledge of baseball because when you look -- he come from Milwaukee, and what he built over there, don't have the payroll they have over here. And they've been very successful.

So I can just imagine what he's going to be able to build over here going forward with the younger players and blending in some veteran players.

Q. Darryl, when you had your jersey retired, early June, the team was 10 under .500. I think you gave your speech out in the field and you addressed the team during your speech. And you said, like, believe in yourselves, you guys can do it. And at the time nobody really, I guess, thought much of it. Do you remember that speech to the team and what do you remember about that?

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: Of course. I spent time when I'm down in Spring Training and I saw them. And I saw the talent that they had of players. It was just a matter of time to believe and we can do it. We've got to put it together as a group.

I just tried to encourage them because they were going through a tough stretch there. And everybody was being very difficult and hard on them. We know what that's like as a player playing here. I've been there and experienced that.

But I just wanted them to realize that the table can turn when you guys start believing in each other, when it's not about just your own personal stats and when it becomes about team. And that's what they needed to do. And they picked it up and they made it about team.

They'd been through the struggle the year before and a couple years before, they've been close and they get knocked out.

This year I saw something different. They were more of a team that just needed to rally around each other. I think that's what they did. They probably went in and had a team meeting and said, hey, we've got to hold each other accountable and step up and pull together. And they did that.

And that's why they are where they're at today because that's what teams have to do. Good teams do that.

The thing about them is they are just figuring out their identity of who they are as a team. They've got a bunch of mixed players in from all over the place. You really don't know yourself early in the season. It takes a while to get there.

I know it was June and everybody thought they were done. But I truly believed that they were not done and I believe they had a push and they made a push to get in. That's all you have to do these days is to make a push to get into the playoffs and you've got a chance to beat anybody once you get in.

Q. Darryl, having unfortunately seen your team at Crenshaw from the other side of the field, which did not go well for my team, your team was so great. Have you been able to stay in touch with people at Crenshaw to help with their program at all -- I know they're not going to get five draft picks anymore? Have you been able to help uplift them?

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: No, I know it's just not the same there anymore, from my understanding. It was a great school with great players. A lot of baseball players came out of there -- myself, Chris Brown and so many other guys, we were very successful coming out of Crenshaw High. We are the original Crenshaw High guys.

Everybody else talks about Crenshaw, but they didn't actually go to Crenshaw. We actually went to school there. We had a lot of success there.

So I hope they can realize how good of a school it really is and really get back to putting guys on the baseball field just as well as they put them on the basketball court.

Q. The other thing I wanted to ask you, when you signed with the Dodgers, we thought -- I think you may have thought -- it could have been homecoming, great guy. Didn't work out unfortunately as well as it did here. Do you have times you want to look back on that and wish it went differently?

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: No, my first season went well. I just ran into the wall and dislocated my shoulder my first season there. I think a lot of people don't really understand that. But I had never been seriously hurt. I've been hurt a couple times, but at the beginning of a season.

And I still drove in 99 ribbies that year, my first season after missing over a month, month and a half of the season with a bad shoulder. Of course, they padded the wall the next day, but it was a day too late.

But that's how things work out. Sometimes things work out, sometimes they don't.

My career here worked out well. It was very successful playing here in the city. I guess I just really enjoyed the fact of what it was like to play here.

My issue was never the city, it was never the people when I became a free agent. My issue was dealing with the front office. I didn't have a relationship. It was broken. So I ended up signing with the Dodgers.

Q. Was 1988 the first thing you thought about when Mets-Dodgers this series was finalized?

DWIGHT GOODEN: For me, not off the bat. I was just happy that the Mets advanced past the Phillies, obviously. Our divisional rival, so I was happy they got past them.

Obviously playing the Dodgers, like you just brought up, when you ask questions, it kind of takes you back to what could have been. So I'm just hoping they get past the Dodgers this time.

Q. Did you think of '88 when this match-up was finalized?

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: Of course. How could I not think of '88. '88 sucked for me. I've never got past '88. And I'm thinking to myself when it's the Mets and Dodgers, I hope the Mets get the revenge back and beat them for the '88 season that we lost to them.

Like I said, that Dodgers team, they beat us. And they beat a good ballclub. They didn't beat just any ballclub. They beat a great ballclub in that '88 series. And it was heartbreaking.

So hopefully going forward the next couple of games here, Met fans will come out support the ballclub. Dodgers aren't going to lay down. They've got a good ballclub over there, too. So it's going to be a tough series. And, like I said, may the best team come out on top.

DWIGHT GOODEN: If you guys look at the numbers in '88, just look at the numbers, numbers don't lie, he should have been MVP in '88, not Gibson.

Q. You guys won the first two games Orel started that series; Orel, of course, had that great September. What do you remember about thinking winning two out of three against him? And did you feel you were in a really good position after -- you had a rain-out in there -- and remember how the team felt beating Orel twice?

DWIGHT GOODEN: It wasn't so much about Orel. Like Darryl said, they had a great team. It was just about winning the series. Obviously during the season we beat them 10 out of 11 or 11 out of 12, what have you.

We didn't take them light, but we thought we had the advantage on them. But we let them off the hook. They got hot at the right time and Orel got hot at the right time.

DARRYL STRAWBERRY: Yeah, it's one of those things when you're in a series like that, if you don't close it out, and we didn't close it out, you had to be able to close those games out. And, like I said, it's a short window. And if you make mistakes and the players come up with big hits -- I

don't know how Doc walked T-Bone Shelby. All he had to do was bounce one up there. (Laughter).

But it's just the moment. It's the moment you're in and everything. See, we can reflect back because we know. We were right in it. And it was heartbreaking to be able to go through that and to see Scioscia hit that big home run.

But that's what playoff baseball is all about. Somebody is going to come up, somebody is going to be in the situation and somebody is going to get a big hit. And it changes the situation of the game. That's what it was for the Dodgers. And it changed that series for us. And they went on to beat us in that series.

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