

NL Championship Series: Mets vs Dodgers

Wednesday, October 16, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Citi Field

Los Angeles Dodgers

Walker Buehler

Postgame 3 Press Conference

Dodgers - 8, Mets - 0

Q. When you got Lindor there in the second inning with the bases loaded, I thought back to that Seager at-bat this year where, kind of similar situation, close game. You challenged him with a fastball. Just kind of wondering, how did you make that -- we've been talking all year about you finding who you are -- to go from being that guy to try to throw it past Seager to here, feeling comfortable throwing the curveball in that situation?

WALKER BUEHLER: I throw what Will puts down. I think this series, and this playoffs, I think is as in sync with the pitching staff as Will has ever been, and he's calling really good games.

I trust what he sees more than anyone. I trust what he sees more than what I see. So I think that's just a tip of the cap to him.

Q. When you started this journey back from the Tommy John, you talked about wanting to pitch in games like this. Quite simply, how fun was tonight?

WALKER BUEHLER: Yeah, it's everything to me. We talked about it before the San Diego start, the big games or me being in big games, that's literally all I care about.

The way Kiké talks about our team having some sort of confidence when I pitch, regardless, I think is kind of really the goal for any starting pitcher. There's the stats and free agency and all this shit, but I want 25 guys in the locker room that believe I give us a really good chance to win.

If I've created that in our locker room somehow, that's probably what I'll be the most proud of when I'm done.

Q. To go back to that Lindor at-bat, do you feel it's something maybe pre-surgery that maybe you would



want to try to throw a fastball in that spot?

WALKER BUEHLER: Oh, in 2018, 2019, 2020, I would have thrown a fastball. Yeah.

Q. I think I noticed you went to the stretch right after that first Lindor at-bat. What sort of made you want to --

WALKER BUEHLER: My right foot moves in my wind-up. And the mound, being cold, it's always pretty hard here, but especially when it's cold, it's extremely hard. And the first three throws of the game, my foot, I had no idea where it was.

In the stretch I'm able to kind of set it and not worry about it. We kind of audibled pretty quick.

Q. With the bases low there in the second inning, is there a place you go to mentally, where you have to channel to be able to sort of get out of that spot?

WALKER BUEHLER: Yeah, I think the fear of pitching the way I pitched all year is probably where I channel it from.

Q. When you just look back and think about what you've been through in your career -- two Tommy John surgeries, come out here in a huge road game, you pitched four strong innings -- can you just talk about the meaning of what that means to you after so much you've been through in your career?

WALKER BUEHLER: It doesn't mean a whole lot much more to me than winning Game 3 of the NLCS. But I think later down the road it may mean a lot to me.

But right now, I'm going to enjoy tonight and then get ready, if we have to play a Game 7. I think when you're in these playoff things, everything gets really blurry and really fast.

And today was a good day for me and for our team. And sometimes I think they feel bigger than they are. Like, if we come out and play like shit tomorrow, we won't care about how we played today.



So I think we kind of saw that in LA. We get the big Game 1 win and the second game doesn't go our way. Now it's 1-1.

To have the advantage in the playoff series is huge. I always talk about momentum in the playoffs, whether it's an inning or a game or a series. And this is definitely a big momentum win for us. But if we don't do something with it, then it doesn't really matter a whole lot.

Q. Speaking of that momentum, everyone wants to go back to this moment because it was huge, bases loaded, you strike out Lindor. What did that do for your momentum and for the team?

WALKER BUEHLER: For me, personally, it's huge. I think the last time I really made a pitch that, in the playoffs, that kind of got it through was 2020 against Atlanta, kind of a similar situation.

Yeah, I think, when you talk about the surgeries and the road and all of that stuff, I think being able to make a big pitch in a big spot is kind of the last thing you check off, but the one thing you want to check off more than anything. And tonight that was a big deal for me.

Q. I saw the stat that you now have the second-most postseason starts in Dodgers franchise history just behind Kersh. All the pitchers who have come through -- Hall of Famers Newcombe, Koufax, Drysdale, Fernando, Hershiser -- for you to be second on that list and giving your team so many victories in the postseason, even after missing the last two postseasons, what's it mean to be in that company?

WALKER BUEHLER: Honestly, I think that's a team stat, to be honest with you. We've been in the playoffs every year I've been here and healthy at least. And I've been very fortunate to get the ball.

The trust thing or whatever, we kind of developed through the years to let me have the ball, this year it's kind of a pretty good example of that just because of the way the regular season went.

But, yeah, it's a cool stat and a cool thing. But to me that's about our team.

Q. Doc has said you've had to almost relearn how to pitch coming from this surgery. What has been the biggest difficulty or the thing you've learned the most in kind of relearning how to come out here and be you again?

WALKER BUEHLER: That with 3-2 and the bases loaded, I have to throw a curveball now instead of a heater.

Q. You had the most swing and misses tonight that you've had in a start since October of 2021. I'm curious, did you feel tonight? Did you feel on the mound kind of the way you did before the injuries came?

WALKER BUEHLER: No, I think in the cold, the ball acts kind of different and can move really big and do some crazy things.

Honestly, the only point of pride I've had in the past couple of months has been trying to get deep in the games and be efficient. To only throw four innings is like the complete opposite of that.

But I'm proud just for a different reason in terms of being able to get through some big spots and tough spots. But it's just one of those things I try not to give into in the playoffs especially and sometimes that leads to a pitch count problem or walking more guys than you typically would. But this game in October is about having zeros, and I'm proud of the fact that I was able to do that four times.

Q. Your curveball tonight had a different profile to it. The spin was down and it was breaking differently. Did you tinker with your grip at all or change anything, or was it the cold, you said, creates different movement profiles?

WALKER BUEHLER: As I said, I think the cold really affects the ball weirdly. The ball moves really well here, or kind of always has. I think the cold just makes the ball act a little bit funky.

I don't know Severino's typical metrics, but his were really, really good as well. Our relievers that came in, when I was looking at their big-boy metrics. I don't know the cross winds and what happens, but all five of my pitches were kind of a little bit bigger or weirder or acted different than normal. I don't think it was just a curveball. Yeah, it's just an interesting environment to pitch in here in the cold.

Q. Was there anything specific you worked on after your outing against San Diego? And after that start, how much more pressure was there knowing that you were going to have to be back on the mound most likely?

WALKER BUEHLER: I don't think "pressure" is kind of the right word. It's so overused. But pressure is a privilege. Talking about how many starts I've gotten to make, that's

the privilege part of it, right? I've gotten to do this a lot of times, and these games certainly get me excited but they don't kind of overwhelm me like they used to when I was young my first couple starts.

Yeah, I'm just fortunate to be a part of this organization and a part of this team, specifically.

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