

NL Championship Series: Mets vs Dodgers

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New York, New York, USA

Citi Field

Los Angeles Dodgers Manager Dave Roberts

Pregame 4 Press Conference



Q. How is Freddie doing? I know he's not in the lineup? Any updates on him today?

DAVE ROBERTS: In good spirits. He's obviously ailing and he's doing everything he can to stay on the field. With the back-to-back games and one tomorrow, just trying to feel kind of make a decision what puts him in the best position for the games going forward.

And just tonight seemed easy. Obviously he wants to be in there. But having him not make the start, run out there on and off the field, be ready for a big spot tonight, made a lot of sense.

Q. With Gavin Lux, I know he's been dealing with a little bit of that hip flexor here and there, but was today's decision mostly just facing a lefty on the mound?

DAVE ROBERTS: Yeah, I think it was a combo. He's had some starts versus left-handed pitching. Quintana has been really tough on lefties, putting them on the ground, the strikeout rates and stuff like that. So that's one part of it.

Also with the leg, just kind of trying to give him an extra day to recover, but also have him available if need be late.

Q. Did you guys decide with Freddie earlier today or even last night that he wouldn't play, or was it after he got here and started going through stuff?

DAVE ROBERTS: I reached out last night. I gave him a call last night, just so if we decided to give him today, I wanted him to take full advantage of not -- when he put his head on the pillow, that no, he wasn't going to be in there tomorrow.

Q. Did it look like he was laboring a little bit more at the end of last night's game?

DAVE ROBERTS: It did. It's quite a jaunt from the first base dugout to first base here. But, no, I saw it. It's the right decision.

Q. You mentioned last night, with his home run, it was important for Shohei to build some confidence. How would you sum up or assess his first postseason so far?

DAVE ROBERTS: I think he's performing well. I'm excited for him. I think the moment isn't too big. I think that you've seen other superstars in years past, their first postseason, you could see them trying too hard.

I don't see that with Shohei. But I will say that that homer last night, I thought, was really good to see for him.

Q. How would you describe, I know we've asked you a bit about the disparity with him hitting with men on base versus not. Is there anything you can analyze with that?

DAVE ROBERTS: I don't. I mean, I do think that there's -- I don't think there's a hitter that says when runners are in scoring position that they're not more focused. So I think that is a part of it.

But I still like him in any spot. But I think there's a little bit of a focus part of it. But we still need him to get on base too.

Q. With Freddie, how did he respond to that phone call? I imagine that's not something he's heard a lot in his career, that he's not going to be playing the next day?

DAVE ROBERTS: It wasn't -- well, he asked me if he was being benched. That's one thing. He doesn't offer up days off.

We all know, I know how much he's going through to stay on the field. So I think that he understood that it's for his best interests to kind of not start tonight's game. But he took it like a professional.



Q. What's it been like -- I was reading somewhere where it's taking four and a half hours of preparation medically for him to prepare to even play?

DAVE ROBERTS: Yeah.

Q. What's it been like to watch this and see what he's going through, the type of respect you have for a guy who won't let it go and wants to help the team?

DAVE ROBERTS: I don't think my respect could be any more for Freddie. To be quite frank, there is a lot that goes into it. But I don't really care to know all the details. I just want to know if he's in there or not, knowing that he's in good hands with our training staff. But what it takes for him to get ready for a ball game these days is a huge undertaking.

Q. There seems to be just a clutch factor with this team, from Shohei, 7 of 9 with runners on; from the pitching, four shutouts out of the last five; to just being able to manufacture runs with the lineup changes. What would you attribute all of that to?

DAVE ROBERTS: Great question. I think some of it is experience. With Shohei, I think a lot of it is talent, wanting to be in that moment, talking about runners in scoring position.

Everything is certainly more magnified in the postseason. But a big spot coming into an inning, making a big pitch, as Walker made last night, I think that lends itself to experience, I really do, to be able to slow certain moments down, not make mistakes on the bases, convert outs when you need to make a play.

Because, like I said, momentum, as Walker's talked about, it's a real thing. Once you start getting momentum with something you should have kind of taken care of, then things happen.

So whether you get a big hit or taking a 3-2 pitch for a ball to then get a big walk or get a big hit or a big play defensively, all that stuff matters. And I guess a lot of it is experience.

Q. By all measures we're hearing that people are getting up early in Japan to watch these games and there's a lot of attention on the Dodgers. Do you get any feedback from that in the bubble you're in of the daily managing?

DAVE ROBERTS: No. I am aware -- I think one of our guys told me how many eyeballs are watching that Game

5, our game versus the Pads, in Japan, which is kind of mind-blowing. It's good for all of us. But I try not to put too much thought into stuff like that.

Q. Do you think this pushing the Dodger brand in Japan could potentially help if Sasaki becomes available and you guys try to recruit him?

DAVE ROBERTS: I hope so. Absolutely. We're thinking alike now. Good for you. (Laughter).

Q. For a guy you got off waivers last year, what's Ryan Brasier done to get into your confidence in games like this?

DAVE ROBERTS: He's been great. Claimed off waivers, like last year, we had Chris Martin. And he did a lot of big leverage stuff.

Brasier, I like him, neutral guy, he's not afraid of big spots. I like the fact that he's pitched in Boston because it's a tough market to pitch, to play in. You know the moment is not going to be too big for him.

I trust him. It just speaks to the front office has done a great job. There's a lot of waiver pick-ups. Honeywell, we picked up Honeywell. And Casparius was three years from being in college. And obviously the trade deadline acquisitions that we had, those three guys have played huge roles in this year's team. So collective effort all of us in this organization.

Q. Today is the 20th anniversary of your stolen base against the Yankees in the ALCS. Has it come up with anybody today or this week? And do you rely upon lessons you learned in that ALCS about how playoff momentum shifts so quickly one way or another?

DAVE ROBERTS: I did hear about it earlier. I didn't realize it. I found out later. Time flies, as they say.

Pulling from that experience, I just think that that team we had wasn't going to be denied. And I think there's something to like figuring out, finding a way to win, being relentless. A lot of tough players. And we're still really tight to this day, me and that 2004 team.

And there's a lot of similarities. Not as many knuckleheads as we had back in the day. But still really good ball players.

Q. With some of the leverage guys you used last night, how comfortable are you using Treinen or Kopech three days in a row if that's how these next couple of games play out?



DAVE ROBERTS: Very comfortable. I think for me, today, we're going to do everything we can to win tonight. We've got Yamamoto on the mound. I feel like we can go to any one of our guys. And we're going to pull whatever levers we can to prevent runs.

Q. What does today look like for Freddie? You mentioned wanting to optimize him for tomorrow. Is it a treatment day? Is it he's available given all it takes for him to get on the field? Is he going through all that to be available for potentially an at-bat?

DAVE ROBERTS: I hope it's a late arrival to the ballpark. I hope he got here later than he typically does. It's a late start to get his body going to call it from the fifth inning on be in a spot.

That's something -- as a player when you're preparing for a game there's anxiety that goes into, like, the next day. And so hopefully that kind of anxiety has kind of been tempered. And you can kind of lock in from the fifth inning and be on in a spot.

Q. I know you're mindful about Yamamoto's workload. Do you have any mindset on that for today's outing?

DAVE ROBERTS: Not really. I think that we've got a great floor, foundation for Yoshinobu now. Pitching I think through five innings four times, I think, something like that.

So I really don't have any limitations relative to -- I don't see him throwing 100 pitches tonight. But I feel that if he's throwing the baseball well, I don't see any reason why he can't get into the sixth inning.

Q. Max Muncy had a big game last night. What have you seen from him so far since coming back from his injury? And what's he meant to this lineup?

DAVE ROBERTS: Well, he means a lot. It's a left-handed bat that can slug. He really controls the zone well. Obviously with Freddie in this situation to be able to kick him back over to first base adds the versatility part of the defense.

Last night was a clinic in how you conduct at-bats. I don't think he swung at a ball all last night, which is pretty remarkable.

I thought that the hit in Game 1 was a big thing for Max, in the sense it was a two-out hit and he showed the willingness to shorten up his swing to drive in a run and not really try to go for an extra base hit because we didn't need one at that time.

And case in point, last night I thought he did a good job pulling his hands in on a cutter to get a base hit to right field. And then ultimately he gets a homer. It's just a presence, because in the lineup he's a threat. And that matters.

Q. Is it Flaherty tomorrow? If not, what are the factors that will decide that?

DAVE ROBERTS: I think it's kind of that's our lean but it's not in stone yet. I think tonight matters. I don't know whether it's how the pen is being used in a win, in a loss. There's things we're kind of still talking through. So I just don't know that answer right now.

Q. And you had a very good pitching staff during the year, but not four-shutouts-in-five-games good. What are the factors that has allowed them to take it to another level in the postseason?

DAVE ROBERTS: I think with the postseason there's off days. So I think you have a chance to deploy guys you want more. It's more sense of urgency, versus in the regular season where sometimes you've got to kind of lose the battle to win the war type thing. And that's how I manage a lot over the course of 162.

But to their credit, I think Will is doing a fantastic job just sharpening every part of it -- whether it's catching the baseball, whether it's the right pitch at the right time, game-calling with urgency.

And to the pitchers' credit and Mark Prior, they're just really locking in and they're doing a fantastic job. I think it's all a compilation of that.

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