

MLB World Series: Yankees vs Dodgers

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Dodger Stadium



Los Angeles Dodgers

Andrew Friedman

President, Baseball Operations
Pregame 1 Press Conference

Q. What happened with Evan Phillips?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Evan came out of the game Sunday and just wasn't rebounding the way that he was hoping. He had tightened up some after that inning and said, hey, I can go back out. Doc and Mark Prior in that moment said this doesn't make sense right now.

Each day has gotten better, but not to the point where -- first and foremost, we're not going to put him in harm's way, and where there's an ambiguity around it, it's not clear. And the way the Major League Baseball injury rule is written, we wouldn't be able to replace him in that it was something that was preexisting.

So just balancing and weighing all of that, this is the decision we came to.

Q. How big of a blow to the bullpen is that for this series?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Obviously Evan has been a huge part of the success we've had in the bullpen. Getting Alex Vesia back and Graterol obviously is really big for our pen. We've got a lot of talent down there. Even more than the talent of Evan, just the amount that he has poured into this, it's hard for him not to be a part of this.

I know he's going to do everything he can with the guys in the pen to get them ready, but obviously it's really disappointing. But all of us are focused on the guys that we've added back, the guys we have down there, and the impact they can have.

Q. Just to clarify, you couldn't take him off because of something he's been dealing with before this series?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Correct.

Q. Just quickly on Evan, yesterday when he spoke to media, he was feeling pretty hopeful that he could be on this roster. Was it something when he came in today or was it just a conversation?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Again, I wish there was a clear answer in this. It's not. It's one of those things that until he really ramps it up in any kind of intensity, we're not going to know.

At the end of the day, the chances of that resulting in either him compromising himself health-wise and actually creating a much bigger issue or not being very effective or all of those things. Because it's not a new injury -- again, that's the way the rule is written right now. It's something that in the off-season I'm sure there will be more discussions around because there are gray areas.

I think avoiding teams circumventing roster rules to gain a competitive advantage, couldn't be more supportive of. I think there are ways to work around this, but that's not for now. That's not the focus right now. For us, it's about winning four games.

Q. You guys talked about the goals you put in this year. First it was to win the NL West. Now you've done that, you're in the biggest goal you had to win the World Series. What does it mean, the hardships this team has gone through, the adversity this year, and how hard you've all worked, to finally now be in this position?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yes, this is the ultimate goal. We have small, stepping stone goals along the way. This is the ultimate goal.

This, as we know, as everyone knows, it's hard to get here. So for us it's about enjoying it and continuing to do the same things we have. We feel like coming into this with our pitching staff, our lineup, our defense, we are a really talented team.

We're playing against a really talented team. I think it will be a great series, and games are going to play out in ways we can't anticipate right now, but I know our guys will be

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ready. It's a race to four.

Q. Proportionally this year's roster is a little less homegrown than the '17, '18, '20 teams with Corey, Cody, Kenley, Joc, Julio, on top of the guys that are still here. How would you say this team with guys coming from outside sources kind of compare and contrast the makeup of this unit maybe compared to some of those previous ones?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Over the last six, seven, eight years, we've been as aggressive as anyone making buy side trades, and when you do that, you trade away some talent in your system. We still feel like we have a lot of talent in our system, which is a testament to our scouting group and our player development group.

This team is incredibly tight, and I think -- look, you're never going to find a World Series team, one of two teams up here, and say, yeah, the chemistry is not very good. But I do think it is something where this team has dealt with some adversity this year, and we've been punched a few times with various injuries. It's had some little speed bump effect.

But the way these guys have embraced the young guys that have come on, created an environment for them to thrive. You know, we've thrown some guys in some spots in the playoffs that even two months ago I would have said you were crazy if you were in that position.

Just the way the veteran players have embraced this and welcomed different young, new players and helped create that environment, I think is a meaningful part of why we're sitting here.

Q. One more thing on Phillips. Is he going to be completely shut down, or is he an option possibly if you guys need to make a roster substitution later on?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: He's not going to be shut down. Again, we didn't have the clarity we needed, so we'll continue to use these days to assess day by day by day, making sure that we're doing the smart thing by him, by us each day. And what that means tomorrow, it's hard to say. But, no, it's not shut down.

Q. Obviously so much is made of your off-season. How much did the way Shohei's contract was structured change the way the off-season played out, and how different did it wind up looking than maybe you had originally in your wildest imaginations could have turned out?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: It obviously was really helpful. As

far as how, my head space is just not there at all. It was important to him. He talked about how much he wants to win. I think we all jive very well on that point.

So when he presented that structure, it was, hey, would this allow you guys to be more aggressive? Yeah, definitely. So it did.

As far as exactly how or what, it's hard to say, but I think it speaks to and really embodies just how much Shohei cares about winning.

Q. Looking ahead, you guys have a little over \$2.5 million left open in the international signing bonus pool allocation. Have you kept that open for the --

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Are you serious right now?

Q. Yes.

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: That's really the question?

(Laughter).

Huh, interesting.

Q. You hear from a lot of other GMs wondering.

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: This is the World Series, Ron. This is outrageous. You want to talk about our hitting philosophy and the player development. Seriously, this is not important for right now. Thank you.

That's outrageous. It's crazy. (Laughter).

Q. Even teams with a lot of resources sometimes miss the postseason, the Yankees last year, something happens along the way. You guys have made it, you've given yourself this chance every year. What is the biggest reason you think you've been able to sustain that beyond just the fact you can afford a big payroll?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, it's hard. It's hard to get to this point. It's hard to withstand things that can go on during the course of a season. If I had to give one answer, I would say it's collaboration. I think between our scouts, our player development, our pro scouts, our analysts, our front office that just allows us to work in concert.

What our player development staff is working on with guys as they come up to the Major Leagues, and the way our Major League coaches are able to work with our Minor League guys, the way our performance staff is able to tie into what our pitching coaches, our hitting coaches are

doing, take that into the weight room and recovery.

I think it's just how cohesive and collaborative we are as a group. We're not afraid to make mistakes. We make plenty of them, but collectively learn from it. And it's something that we are very mindful. We've seen larger revenue teams in the past that have had a run of success and then fallen off a cliff and taken years and years to build back.

We have worked very hard at the art of how to balance the now and the future to put us in position to have a chance to win a World Series every year. That's our goal, and that is our focus obviously right now and in each year. I think it's just how cohesive all the various departments and people are together that's enabled that or helped in that.

Q. Dave Roberts is obviously a big part of that cohesion. What have you seen from him this year, specifically in terms of handling challenges he didn't have to do previous?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I got asked this after we won the NLCS of, hey, is this Doc's best managerial job?

I think he's been good every year. Again, this is something that is very much a result-based narrative that comes out of October baseball. Depending on what the outcomes are, the narratives come with that.

That makes sense. I get why it happens. But he could have handled something really well and our player or players, something happened where we just didn't execute, we didn't perform, something happened, that I don't necessarily think it was a decision-making point.

I think he's been extremely consistent with his optimism, with the energy he brings, with how good of a job he does of putting our players in positions to succeed.

Those are the big picture points, and I think he's really good at that, and I think he's been really good at that.

Q. Was Shohei pitching in the playoffs ever something you thought was a possibility, or was it just kind of a non-starter and nothing that ever was close to something you guys really thought could happen?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I would say it was not anything close, just with the timing of his surgery with where we knew he would be kind of rehab-wise. It was never something that was really taken into account.

I think the big thing for us was figuring out -- because absent the baseball calendar and what's happening and us

playing in October, that would have been the time in his rehab progression to start on live BPs, kind of like January for healthy pitchers who are getting ready for Spring Training.

So the question was, okay, as we're playing these intense games, do we layer that part on right now? Do we wait? It was much more the question than him actually pitching in these games.

Q. How do you react to people who say these two teams are here just because they spend the most money?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I don't get caught up in that very much. Payrolls don't decide the standings. Seedings going into the playoffs don't decide who wins the World Series. We've seen a lot of teams spend money and not do it well.

I think there's unique challenges that each market has that makes it challenging and rewarding when you are successful. I don't spend much time on that. Much more on doing everything I can to be a part of us creating something that we can win as many championships as we can and we can look back.

I've said this. My ultimate, kind of big picture goal is that, when we are done, that we're able to look back and say that was the golden era of Dodger baseball, and that is an incredibly high bar to even say that. That's where my focus is.

Q. With Brusdar Graterol added, was that a rough call at all given how much time he's missed the last four weeks?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: No, I mean, he's healthy, he's been building back up. He's faced hitters, he's up to 97. He's bounced back well. Stuff's in a good place. No.

Q. Given his history, I'm sure that factored into it, but just all he went through this year, how would you sort of describe how he's doing now, I guess, compared to earlier?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: He was ecstatic, over the moon to be on the roster. He's worked really hard to try to get back. Obviously this year to date has not gone the way any of us would have liked, but the fact that he has had the stuff and been able to bounce back like he has in this last week gives us confidence that he's healthy.

And when he's healthy, he is very additive and helpful to us winning baseball games.



Q. What are your earliest memories of Brent Honeywell, having drafted him in Tampa Bay, and what's it been like watching him contribute to this Dodgers team ten years later?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I think we need to go to HBO for my first encounter with Brent Honeywell. I had him at a predraft workout in 2014, and I'd heard about this guy who threw a screwball, in our area guy, really liked him and thought good potential sleeper pick.

So I went up and introduced myself and asked him if he threw a screwball. Again, this is where we need to transition to HBO. His response was very entertaining. Digging into it more with him, even more entertaining. The competitiveness, the confidence is something that he had then and he continues to carry with him today, which I think has enabled him to have the success he's had.

He's had a lot of adversity with various injuries, but the way he's bounced back just speaks to who he is, but there are some really good stories that unfortunately are just hard to tell in this setting.

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