

MLB World Series: Dodgers vs Blue Jays

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Rogers Centre

Los Angeles Dodgers

Andrew Friedman

Pregame 1 Press Conference

Q. I know our thoughts are with Alex Vesia and his family at the moment. Just keeping it to baseball, when you look at this bullpen, he obviously has been a very key high-leverage arm for this group. Without him, how do you see things -- someone either stepping in in that role, and what do you like about Will Klein being added as well as Edgardo being back with the group in the bullpen?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, we feel really good about our relievers in terms of the righty, lefty, the different looks, the stuff that we'll bring out. Obviously, it comes down to execution, and those guys feeling confident to go in in the lanes that Doc, Mark, Danny kind of figure out and for them to just trust to flood the zone. If we're able to do that, I think then we'll be really successful.

So it comes down to execution, but feel good about the group. Edgardo and Will, for us, just their pitch mix, how it matched up against their hitters, it felt like gave us more margin for error in different ways and different ways to match up that we felt like fit our group really well.

Q. Given the fact that you had the luxury, I guess it is, to slow play Snell while he was on the injured list, how much has having that extra time and being able to do things while he was on the IL translate to what he's doing in the postseason now?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I mean, a lot's been made about us slow playing. I don't know how much it was slow playing versus -- there's a lot of unknowns about injuries. Like, we're not going to sit here and pretend we know what exactly causes 'em. And the build-up to get back, for us, it's about getting back to stay back. So it's imperfect and it's much more art than science, and so we just erred a little bit more on the side of caution to give ourselves a better chance of when they come back to stay back.



And the work that he put in along the way, obviously, was great. But I think more than anything, he loves these moments. He talked about it in the off-season, he talked about it in spring training. He's talked about it all year. He loves these moments. So whether we took a little extra time or not, whether he missed any time, I think his -- him being dialed right now is the least surprising thing to us.

Q. The fact that you had him at Tampa Bay, the prior knowledge you had of him, how much confidence did that give you that -- in signing him that, okay, this is going to be our guy in October?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I mean, I guess it gets at how long I've been doing this because knowing him as a 18-year-old and then watching that maturation through the minor leagues to the big leagues, the success he had winning a Cy, the World Series in 2020, getting traded to San Diego, and whenever we would play them, we would always spend some time together and catch up, and just watching that maturation year over year over year in terms of how he saw the game, the desire to compete, the desire to win, and just each year I would walk away from those interactions like, wow, this is getting way more advanced and really, really impressive.

Then last off-season, going into the off-season, he was our number one priority. Sitting down with him and getting even more insight into the way that his mind works, just how badly he wants to be a part of winning World Series, just strengthened our belief in what a great fit he was even more.

Q. You guys do everything you can to try to win a World Series, and people are saying you're ruining baseball. What do you make of people saying that? Because all you're trying to do is win a championship.

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I mean, for us, it is all about our incredible fans and us giving back. What they bring night-in and night-out, the passion that they show for the Dodgers -- now, this is my 11th season and even on the road, the number of Dodger fans that are there and just the love that they have for this team, our job is to pour ourselves back into it and try to give them a team that can compete for championships, and that they can be proud of.

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And for us, that's our focus. Everything for us is about pouring back into our fans and that partnership that we have with them.

So, you know, that's our focus. So anything else that comes from it -- and obviously, I've heard a lot of it -- it's just not front of mind for us because everything is around how do we put ourselves in the best position to win now and also to win in the future.

Q. You've had seasons where you guys absolutely dominated the regular season and came up short in October. Last year you won it all and this year you're dominating again. Was there sort of a philosophical shift at all to try to build a team that can win and be at peak strength now versus maybe, like, May 15th or something?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: No. I think you always want to be peaking and playing your best baseball in October. I don't know that we have a formula or a thought of really how to do that. That is definitely the goal of what you want. Last year, we had success in October in a very different way. So I think every team kind of takes on its own identity. I think there are a lot of different ways to win a World Series. Clearly, you have to be really talented. You also have to have some good fortune, and for us, it's putting ourselves in the best position we can to have good fortune kind of fall with a lot of different outs in different ways that we can go to try to create that.

So you always want to be playing well in October. I don't know that we have this like, hey, let's just take our foot off in the regular season and then step on it. I know it's what it looks like, but it wasn't anything conscious.

Q. You guys, just by getting here, have gotten a lot closer than any team that's tried to repeat in the last quarter century. What have you learned about that? Can you be deliberate about the way you go about trying to repeat, especially with regard to how much you run it back versus trying to integrate new pieces into the mix so it doesn't get stale?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I mean, it's certainly hard, as we can all attest to by watching over the last 25 years, with the number of kind of unique champions each year, and no one repeating. But for us, when we won last year, our focus and meetings were all about, okay, how do we win in 2025. And there were two big risk factors that we had kind of seen looking back. One is complacency. You've reached the top of the mountain, you're less hungry. I didn't worry about that with our group.

The second is usually to win 11 or 13 games in October,

you have to really step on your pitching to do it, and it's a longer season and you come back faster. We mixed our -- you know, we just didn't have that starting pitching and the depth that we do right now last year. So we didn't necessarily -- we weren't going to encounter that. So for us, it was about how do we add some guys that are really hungry to our group that will be really hungry to do everything they can to win that final game of the season. And, again, it ties back to Blake and just how much he wants this as well.

Q. As you've watched the Blue Jays operate in recent years in different facets, market, baseball ops, player development, things of that nature, is there anything that they do that's stuck out to you that you feel is a part of their success?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I mean, I think Mark and Ross have done a tremendous job here, and I think going back for us one big thing -- probably our largest kind of focal point and biggest goal was to try to create a destination spot where our own players didn't want to leave and where players from other teams wanted to come, and I think invariably we find ourselves going up against the Blue Jays a lot in different ways, and they have created that as well.

I think they have done a really good job with their facilities, the way they communicate, how they help get the most out of players. I think they have done a tremendous job. So for them to be here is not surprising at all to me.

Q. One quick one on Alex. Not putting him on the family list, is that because you didn't anticipate he would be available to pitch in the series?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I mean, we just didn't want to have any potential for any kind of pressure. This is so much bigger than baseball. For us, it was doing whatever small part we could to just a hundred percent be supportive.

Q. And then only five franchises have won three titles in a six-year period. If you guys win this year, do you think about what it would mean for just the legacy of what you guys have built here? Have you even thought about that at all? Is that --

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: No. I mean, I think one of our overarching goals is to try to -- whenever the time comes, and we get fired and -- is that people look back on this period as the golden age of Dodger baseball, which is a high bar. What exactly it means, how it slots, life's too busy. That will be more when we're done. But that's our goal, is for people to look back on this time period and say,

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That was the golden era of Dodger baseball.

Q. You mentioned the word "identity." What would you say the identity of this team is?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I think just a relentless desire to compete and win. Watching the work that they do every single day on the field, underneath, the conversations that are had, it's guys challenging each other to do everything they can to go out and win a baseball game that day. And watching the work, the focus, the intent, with how much they all care for one another has been really special to watch.

Q. Dave, yesterday, mentioned with the starting pitching, the plan is always to have them at their best on October 1st. How does that plan change when you lose Snell for four months, Glasnow for two and a half, and you're kind of piecing together a rotation for a while there?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: How does it change...

Q. The plan. How do you adjust?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Well, I mean, our biggest thing is obviously looking back, we've had years where we've had a lot of injuries, and in some of those instances, it's season-ending, it's into the next season. The injuries, for the most part, that we faced this year were injuries that we could forecast that guys were coming back. So now it was okay. With each individual guy, it was, A, we have the depth to try to withstand this right now, but with each individual player returning was doing the best we could to lay out the most thoughtful progression, rehab plan, to get them back to stay back, but also to be hitting their stride and the stuff and execution in place going into October.

Q. You mentioned earlier Blake being your guys' number one priority this past off-season. Obviously, the off-season prior to that he had a lot of trouble on the open market securing the deal that he was looking for. Did something change about him fundamentally that made him a more attractive pitcher in your eyes between the off-season heading into 2024 and heading into 2025, the year he was with the Giants?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: No. I think what he did with the Giants, especially in the second half -- he's always a guy that -- you know, and we talked about this at the initial press conference, where people think of him, looking back, as not having great command. I think it is more that he's just really hard to hit, and so he would have longer prolonged at-bats, foul balls.

But something clicked for him that year in San Francisco where just flooding the zone and getting ahead and just the radical difference that that created because then he's able to eat 18 outs, 21 outs, and just go deeper into a game. It's hard to pay a lot for a guy that will go five innings. So I think that showed his ability -- and really not ability because we believed it was there, but mindset and that growth that came with it.

But there's also a timing element. There's some off-seasons where a guy may fit us really well and he happens to be available; other times where it's not as good of a fit in that moment. So there's a lot of moment-in-time stuff as well. But I will say that that year with the Giants, especially that second half, showed even more growth with what he was doing on the mound.

Q. Do you and your staff, from observing, sense that Snell, Glasnow, or Sasaki are any sharper or fresher just because of how many fewer competitive innings they had all year?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I don't know how to answer it. I think they're all in a really good spot right now. Yamamoto went wire to wire and he looks really good as well. I don't know how to answer that. But feel very fortunate that they're as dialed in as they are and feel good about the group as a whole.

Q. On the flip side, you've been in situations where you got to October and you've had a lot of guys who went 32 starts, 190 innings, and could you sense they're a little worn down, but pushing through?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Not as much. It's been more injury related, that we've gotten there and them not been there. I think the guys that we've had that have gone wire to wire, they have been in a good spot, similar to Yamamoto, it's so much, you know, timing and where guys are. Obviously in August or September if a guy's wearing down, the number one leading cause of injury is fatigue. So if guys are getting fatigued, usually they will then take a break and build back up the strength. But we haven't really seen that as much.

Q. You talked about making yourself a desirable destination when it comes to player acquisition. For you -- I know the public looks at the financial aspect, but is there something that stood out that is very important to you when it comes to acquiring players, or is it just putting a winning product on the field?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: No, I think there's a lot that goes into it. I think being known as a really good player development organization. Players ask those questions.



When we're meeting with players in the off-season, they want to know that you can help maximize their ability, and that you're getting the most out of their teammates. Because when you can do that and do it well, you tend to win more games.

I think guys' desire to win, you know, that's a really important factor. I think how you treat families. It's a challenging life with the amount of travel and usually being away from your home city, and it's a challenge for the families. So doing everything we can on our end to make that as comfortable as they possibly can so when a guy's a free agent and is thinking about leaving, we like the wife to also say, Actually, we should stay, it's so much easier. So I think communication, being honest, having a really strong player development group in place at the Major League level, and how you treat families and treats the players I think matters a lot in that.

Q. Just to that point, Stan told us yesterday that Sasaki wanted Japanese toilets, you guys gave him Japanese toilets. Ohtani wanted an extra batting cage you gave him an extra batting cage so that just sort of like exemplifies what you were just talking about. My question is about Doc. I mean, here's a guy now that's got the highest winning percentage practically in baseball history for a guy that's managed as long as he has, 10 years, and he's like 369 games over .500. How well has he developed and fit into your system of how you basically want a manager to perform within your baseball operations department?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I think it's our system, not my system. I can't say enough about Doc. Just the consistency, the relentless optimism, his ability to put guys in great spots to succeed, and his ability to communicate around that. Because it's not always in ways that players want or believe is right. And his ability to lead our group has been exceptional over these 10 years. He has been a significant part, obviously, of our success looking back. I feel very fortunate that he'll be a significant part of our success going forward. And just what he has meant to this group, and how he's helped lead through a lot of the ups and downs is no small part in why we're sitting here.

Q. Do you think he's the perfect example of the way the manager has to operate in the baseball operations system these days?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: I don't know. I think he's great. I don't know. I don't spend much time laying out the other 29 and comparing. I know that we're really happy with the partnership we have, and feel great that he's on our side.

Q. Just sort of to play off that question earlier, when

you signed Snell, and having Glasnow here, and Sasaki, did you expect that they would be able to go wire to wire, or did you figure that given their histories and youth that you may need to back them off a little bit to get them strong here?

ANDREW FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I guess we weren't sure. But it wasn't something where we were going to be really surprised. I think the whole point of depth is that injuries happen. Sometimes they happen in clusters, ideally they happen where they're more spaced out. And the last thing that we want to do is say, Oh well, we won 81 games this year because we just didn't have depth, we had injuries and it was bad luck.

So it's trying to be as prepared as we can, not knowing exactly what's going to happen or when. But to have that depth to help backfill and keep our heads above water during periods where it's more clustered -- and we went through some periods this year where it was very clustered, the injuries. So I wouldn't say we knew it for certain, but we know it's a possibility and just trying to be as prepared as we can be.

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